MARCEL PROUST
IV

Petit

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

THE SWEET CHEAT GONE

THE PAST RECAPTURED

"When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past....."

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

is a translation of the eight-volume work,

A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, by Marcel Proust,

grouped in this four-volume edition as follows:

I

I. *Du Côté de Chez Swann*
Swann's Way

II. *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*
Within a Budding Grove

II

III. *Le Côté de Guermantes* (*I*)

IV. *Le Côté de Guermantes* (*II*)
The Guermantes Way

Sodome et Gomorrhe (*I*)
Cities of the Plain (I)

III

V. *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (*II*)
Cities of the Plain (II)

VI. *La Prisonnière*
The Captive

IV

VII. *Albertine Disparue*
The Sweet Cheat Gone

VIII. *Le Temps Retrouvé*
The Past Recaptured

MARCEL PROUST

THE SWEET CHEAT GONE

TRANSLATED BY C. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF

THE PAST RECAPTURED

TRANSLATED BY FREDERICK A. BLOSSOM

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CONTENTS

Chapter I page 1
Grief and oblivion

Chapter II page 195
Mademoiselle de Forcheville

Chapter III page 286
Venice

Chapter IV page 327
A fresh light upon Robert de Saint-Loup

TRANSLATOR'S DEDICATION

ERNST ROBERT CURTIUS
zugeeignet

Obwohl die arme Albertine verschwunden ist,
haben die Brüder Albrecht gut gewusst
wie uns zu trösten.

THE SWEET CHEAT GONE

CHAPTER I

Grief and Oblivion

"MADEMOISELLE ALBERTINE has gone!" How much farther does anguish penetrate in psychology than psychology itself! A moment ago, as I lay analysing my feelings, I had supposed that this separation without a final meeting was precisely what I wished, and, as I compared the mediocrity of the pleasures that Albertine afforded me with the richness of the desires which she prevented me from realising, had felt that I was being subtle, had concluded that I did not wish to see her again, that I no longer loved her. But now these words: "Mademoiselle Albertine has gone!" had expressed themselves in my heart in the form of an anguish so keen that I would not be able to endure it for any length of time. And so what I had supposed to mean nothing to me was the only thing in my whole life. How ignorant we are of ourselves. The first thing to be done was to make my anguish cease at once. Tender towards myself as my mother had been towards my dying grandmother, I said to myself with that anxiety which we feel to prevent a person whom we love from suffering: "Be patient for just a moment, we shall find something to take the pain away, don't fret, we are not going to allow you to suffer like this." It was among ideas of this sort that my instinct of self-preservation sought for the first sedatives to lay upon my open wound: "All this is not of the slightest importance, for

I am going to make her return here at once. I must think first how I am to do it, but in any case she will be here this evening. Therefore, it is useless to worry myself." "All this is not of the slightest importance," I had not been content with giving myself this assurance, I had tried to convey the same impression to Françoise by not allowing her to see what I was suffering, because, even at the moment when I was feeling so keen an anguish, my love did not forget how important it was that it should appear a happy love, a mutual love, especially in the eyes of Françoise, who, as she disliked Albertine, had always doubted her sincerity. Yes, a moment ago, before Françoise came into the room, I had supposed that I was no longer in love with Albertine, I had supposed that I was leaving nothing out of account; a careful analyst, I had supposed that I knew the state of my own heart. But our intelligence, however great it may be, cannot perceive the elements that compose it and remain unsuspected so long as, from the volatile state in which they generally exist, a phenomenon capable of isolating them has not subjected them to the first stages of solidification. I had been mistaken in thinking that I could see clearly into my own heart. But this knowledge which had not been given me by the finest mental perceptions had now been brought to me, hard, glittering, strange, like a crystallised salt, by the abrupt reaction of grief. I was so much in the habit of seeing Albertine in the room, and I saw, all of a sudden, a fresh aspect of Habit. Hitherto I had regarded it chiefly as an annihilating force which suppresses the originality and even our consciousness of our perceptions; now I beheld it as a dread deity,

so riveted to ourself, its meaningless aspect so incrusted in our heart, that if it detaches itself, if it turns away from us, this deity which we can barely distinguish inflicts upon us sufferings more terrible than any other and is then as cruel as death itself.

The first thing to be done was to read Albertine's letter, since I was anxious to think of some way of making her return. I felt that this lay in my power, because, as the future is what exists only in our mind, it seems to us to be still alterable by the intervention, *in extremis*, of our will. But, at the same time, I remembered that I had seen act upon it forces other than my own, against which, however long an interval had been allowed me, I could never have prevailed. Of what use is it that the hour has not yet struck if we can do nothing to influence what is bound to happen. When Albertine was living in the house I had been quite determined to retain the initiative in our parting. And now she had gone. I opened her letter. It ran as follows:

"My dear friend,

"Forgive me for not having dared to say to you in so many words what I am now writing, but I am such a coward, I have always been so afraid in your presence that I have never been able to force myself to speak. This is what I should have said to you. Our life together has become impossible; you must, for that matter, have seen, when you turned upon me the other evening, that there had been a change in our relations. What we were able to straighten out that night would become irreparable in a few days' time. It is better for us, therefore, since we have had the good fortune to be reconciled, to part

as friends. That is why, my darling, I am sending you this line, and beg you to be so kind as to forgive me if I am causing you a little grief when you think of the immensity of mine. My dear old boy, I do not wish to become your enemy, it will be bad enough to become by degrees, and very soon, a stranger to you; and so, as I have absolutely made up my mind, before sending you this letter by Françoise, I shall have asked her to let me have my boxes. Good-bye: I leave with you the best part of myself.

"ALBERTINE."

"All this means nothing," I told myself, "It is even better than I thought, for as she doesn't mean a word of what she says she has obviously written her letter only to give me a severe shock, so that I shall take fright, and not be horrid to her again. I must make some arrangement at once: Albertine must be brought back this evening. It is sad to think that the Bontemps are no better than blackmailers who make use of their niece to extort money from me. But what does that matter? Even if, to bring Albertine back here this evening, I have to give half my fortune to Mme. Bontemps, we shall still have enough left, Albertine and I, to live in comfort." And, at the same time, I calculated whether I had time to go out that morning and order the yacht and the Rolls-Royce which she coveted, quite forgetting, now that all my hesitation had vanished, that I had decided that it would be unwise to give her them. "Even if Mme. Bontemps' support is not sufficient, if Albertine refuses to obey her aunt and makes it a condition of her returning to me that she shall enjoy complete inde-

pendence, well, however much it may distress me, I shall leave her to herself; she shall go out by herself, whenever she chooses. One must be prepared to make sacrifices, however painful they may be, for the thing to which one attaches most importance, which is, in spite of everything that I decided this morning, on the strength of my scrupulous and absurd arguments, that Albertine shall continue to live here." Can I say for that matter that to leave her free to go where she chose would have been altogether painful to me? I should be lying. Often already I had felt that the anguish of leaving her free to behave improperly out of my sight was perhaps even less than that sort of misery which I used to feel when I guessed that she was bored in my company, under my roof. No doubt at the actual moment of her asking me to let her go somewhere, the act of allowing her to go, with the idea of an organised orgy, would have been an appalling torment. But to say to her: "Take our yacht, or the train, go away for a month, to some place which I have never seen, where I shall know nothing of what you are doing,"—this had often appealed to me, owing to the thought that, by force of contrast, when she was away from me, she would prefer my society, and would be glad to return. "This return is certainly what she herself desires; she does not in the least insist upon that freedom upon which, moreover, by offering her every day some fresh pleasure, I should easily succeed in imposing, day by day, a further restriction. No, what Albertine has wanted is that I shall no longer make myself unpleasant to her, and most of all—like Odette with Swann—that I shall make up my mind to marry her. Once she is married, her in-

dependence will cease to matter; we shall stay here together, in perfect happiness." No doubt this meant giving up any thought of Venice. But the places for which we have most longed, such as Venice (all the more so, the most agreeable hostesses, such as the Duchesse de Guermantes, amusements such as the theatre), how pale, insignificant, dead they become when we are tied to the heart of another person by a bond so painful that it prevents us from tearing ourself away. "Albertine is perfectly right, for that matter, about our marriage. Mamma herself was saying that all these postponements were ridiculous. Marrying her is what I ought to have done long ago, it is what I shall have to do, it is what has made her write her letter without meaning a word of it; it is only to bring about our marriage that she has postponed for a few hours what she must desire as keenly as I desire it: her return to this house. Yes, that is what she meant, that is the purpose of her action," my compassionate judgment assured me; but I felt that, in telling me this, my judgment was still maintaining the same hypothesis which it had adopted from the start. Whereas I felt that it was the other hypothesis which had invariably proved correct. No doubt this second hypothesis would never have been so bold as to formulate in so many words that Albertine could have had intimate relations with Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend. And yet, when I was overwhelmed by the invasion of those terrible tidings, as the train slowed down before stopping at Parville station, it was the second hypothesis that had already been proved correct. This hypothesis had never, in the interval, conceived the idea that Albertine might leave me of her own accord, in this fashion, and

without warning me and giving me time to prevent her departure. But all the same if, after the immense leap forwards which life had just made me take, the reality that confronted me was as novel as that which is presented by the discovery of a scientist, the inquiries of an examining magistrate or the researches of a historian into the mystery of a crime or a revolution, this reality while exceeding the meagre previsions of my second hypothesis nevertheless fulfilled them. This second hypothesis was not an intellectual feat, and the panic fear that I had felt on the evening when Albertine had refused to kiss me, the night when I had heard the sound of her window being opened, that fear was not based upon reason. But—and the sequel will shew this more clearly, as several episodes must have indicated it already—the fact that our intellect is not the most subtle, the most powerful, the most appropriate instrument for grasping the truth, is only a reason the more for beginning with the intellect, and not with a subconscious intuition, a ready-made faith in presentiments. It is life that, little by little, case by case, enables us to observe that what is most important to our heart, or to our mind, is learned not by reasoning but by other powers. And then it is the intellect itself which, taking note of their superiority, abdicates its sway to them upon reasoned grounds and consents to become their collaborator and their servant. It is faith confirmed by experiment. The unforeseen calamity with which I found myself engaged, it seemed to me that I had already known it also (as I had known of Albertine's friendship with a pair of Lesbians), from having read it in so many signs in which (notwithstanding the contrary affirmations of my reason,

based upon Albertine's own statements) I had discerned the weariness, the horror that she felt at having to live in that state of slavery, signs traced as though in invisible ink behind her sad, submissive eyes, upon her cheeks suddenly inflamed with an unaccountable blush, in the sound of the window that had suddenly been flung open. No doubt I had not ventured to interpret them in their full significance or to form a definite idea of her immediate departure. I had thought, with a mind kept in equilibrium by Albertine's presence, only of a departure arranged by myself at an undetermined date, that is to say a date situated in a non-existent time; consequently I had had merely the illusion of thinking of a departure, just as people imagine that they are not afraid of death when they think of it while they are in good health and actually do no more than introduce a purely negative idea into a healthy state which the approach of death would automatically destroy. Besides, the idea of Albertine's departure on her own initiative might have occurred to my mind a thousand times over, in the clearest, the most sharply defined form, and I should no more have suspected what, in relation to myself, that is to say in reality, that departure would be, what an unprecedented, appalling, unknown thing, how entirely novel a calamity. Of her departure, had I foreseen it, I might have gone on thinking incessantly for years on end, and yet all my thoughts of it, placed end to end, would not have been comparable for an instant, not merely in intensity but in kind, with the unimaginable hell the curtain of which Françoise had raised for me when she said: "Mademoiselle Albertine has gone." In order to form an idea of an unknown situation our imagination borrows

elements that are already familiar and for that reason does not form any idea of it. But our sensibility, even in its most physical form, receives, as it were the brand of the lightning, the original and for long indelible imprint of the novel event. And I scarcely ventured to say to myself that, if I had foreseen this departure, I would perhaps have been incapable of picturing it to myself in all its horror, or indeed, with Albertine informing me of it, and myself threatening, imploring her, of preventing it! How far was any longing for Venice removed from me now! As far as, in the old days at Combray, was the longing to know Mme. de Guermantes when the time came at which I longed for one thing only, to have Mamma in my room. And it was indeed all these anxieties that I had felt ever since my childhood, which, at the bidding of this new anguish, had come hastening to reinforce it, to amalgamate themselves with it in a homogeneous mass that was stifling me. To be sure, the physical blow which such a parting strikes at the heart, and which, because of that terrible capacity for registering things with which the body is endowed, makes our suffering somehow contemporaneous with all the epochs in our life in which we have suffered; to be sure, this blow at the heart upon which the woman speculates a little perhaps—so little compunction do we shew for the sufferings of other people—who is anxious to give the maximum intensity to regret, whether it be that, merely hinting at an imaginary departure, she is seeking only to demand better terms, or that, leaving us for ever —for ever!—she desires to wound us, or, in order to avenge herself, or to continue to be loved, or to enhance the memory that she will leave behind her, to rend

asunder the net of weariness, of indifference which she has felt being woven about her—to be sure, this blow at our heart, we had vowed that we would avoid it, had assured ourself that we would make a good finish. But it is rarely indeed that we do finish well, for, if all was well, we would never finish! And besides, the woman to whom we shew the utmost indifference feels nevertheless in an obscure fashion that while we have been growing tired of her, by virtue of an identical force of habit, we have grown more and more attached to her, and she reflects that one of the essential elements in a good finish is to warn the other person before one goes. But she is afraid, if she warns us, of preventing her own departure. Every woman feels that, if her power over a man is great, the only way to leave him is sudden flight. A fugitive because a queen, precisely. To be sure, there is an unspeakable interval between the boredom which she inspired a moment ago and, because she has gone, this furious desire to have her back again. But for this, apart from those which have been furnished in the course of this work and others which will be furnished later on, there are reasons. For one thing, her departure occurs as often as not at the moment when our indifference—real or imagined—is greatest, at the extreme point of the oscillation of the pendulum. The woman says to herself: "No, this sort of thing cannot go on any longer," simply because the man speaks of nothing but leaving her, or thinks of nothing else; and it is she who leaves him. Then, the pendulum swinging back to its other extreme, the interval is all the greater. In an instant it returns to this point; once more, apart from all the reasons that have been given, it is so natural. Our heart still beats;

and besides, the woman who has gone is no longer the same as the woman who was with us. Her life under our roof, all too well known, is suddenly enlarged by the addition of the lives with which she is inevitably to be associated, and it is perhaps to associate herself with them that she has left us. So that this novel richness of the life of the woman who has gone reacts upon the woman who was with us and was perhaps planning her departure. To the series of psychological facts which we are able to deduce and which form part of her life with us, our too evident boredom in her company, our jealousy also (the effect of which is that the men who have been left by a number of women have been left almost always in the same manner because of their character and of certain always identical reactions which can be calculated: each man has his own way of being betrayed, as he has his own way of catching cold), to this series not too mysterious for us, there corresponds doubtless a series of facts of which we were unaware. She must for some time past have been keeping up relations, written, or verbal or through messengers, with some man, or some woman, have been awaiting some signal which we may perhaps have given her ourself, unconsciously, when we said: "X. called yesterday to see me," if she had arranged with X. that on the eve of the day when she was to join him he was to call upon me. How many possible hypotheses! Possible only. I constructed the truth so well, but in the realm of possibility only, that, having one day opened, and then by mistake, a letter addressed to my mistress, from this letter which was written in a code, and said: "Go on waiting for a signal to go to the Marquis de Saint-Loup; let me know to-morrow by telephone," I

reconstructed a sort of projected flight; the name of the Marquis de Saint-Loup was there only as a substitute for some other name, for my mistress did not know Saint-Loup well enough, but had heard me speak of him, and moreover the signature was some sort of nickname, without any intelligible form. As it happened, the letter was addressed not to my mistress but to another person in the building who bore a different name which had been misread. The letter was written not in a code, but in bad French, because it was written by an American woman, who was indeed a friend of Saint-Loup as he himself told me. And the odd way in which this American woman wrote certain letters had given the appearance of a nickname to a name which was quite genuine, only foreign. And so I had on that occasion been entirely at fault in my suspicions. But the intellectual structure which had in my mind combined these facts, all of them false, was itself the so accurate, so inflexible form of the truth that when three months later my mistress, who had at that time been meaning to spend the rest of her life with me, left me, it was in a fashion absolutely identical with that which I had imagined on the former occasion. A letter arrived, containing the same peculiarities which I had wrongly attributed to the former letter, but this time it was indeed meant as a signal.

This calamity was the greatest that I had experienced in my life. And, when all was said, the suffering that it caused me was perhaps even exceeded by my curiosity to learn the causes of this calamity which Albertine had deliberately brought about. But the sources of great events are like those of rivers, in vain do we explore the earth's surface, we can never find them. So Albertine

had for a long time past been planning her flight; I have said (and at the time it had seemed to me simply a sign of affectation and ill humour, what Françoise called "lifting her head") that, from the day upon which she had ceased to kiss me, she had gone about as though tormented by a devil, stiffly erect, unbending, saying the simplest things in a sorrowful tone, slow in her movements, never once smiling. I cannot say that there was any concrete proof of conspiracy with the outer world. Françoise told me long afterwards that, having gone into Albertine's room two days before her departure, she had found it empty, the curtains drawn, but had detected from the atmosphere of the room and the sounds that came in that the window was open. And indeed she had found Albertine on the balcony. But it is hard to say with whom she could have been communicating from there, and moreover the drawn curtains screening the open window could doubtless be explained by her knowing that I was afraid of draughts, and by the fact that, even if the curtains afforded me little protection, they would prevent Françoise from seeing from the passage that the shutters had been opened so early. No, I can see nothing save one trifling incident which proves merely that on the day before her departure she knew that she was going. For during the day she took from my room without my noticing it a large quantity of wrapping paper and cloth which I kept there, and in which she spent the whole night packing her innumerable wrappers and dressing-gowns so that she might leave the house in the morning; this was the only incident, it was more than enough. I cannot attach any importance to her having almost forced upon me that evening a thousand francs

which she owed me, there is nothing peculiar in that, for she was extremely scrupulous about money. Yes, she took the wrapping paper overnight, but it was not only then that she knew that she was going to leave me! For it was not resentment that made her leave me, but her determination, already formed, to leave me, to abandon the life of which she had dreamed, that gave her that air of resentment. A resentful air, almost solemnly cold towards myself, except on the last evening when, after staying in my room longer than she had intended, she said—a remark which surprised me, coming from her who had always sought to postpone the moment of parting—she said to me from the door: "Good-bye, my dear; good-bye, my dear." But I did not take any notice of this, at the moment. Françoise told me that next morning when Albertine informed her that she was going (but this, for that matter, may be explained also by exhaustion for she had spent the whole night in packing all her clothes, except the things for which she had to ask Françoise as they were not in her bedroom or her dressing-room), she was still so sad, so much more erect, so much stiffer than during the previous days that Françoise, when Albertine said to her: "Good-bye, Françoise," almost expected to see her fall to the ground. When we are told anything like this, we realise that the woman who appealed to us so much less than any of the women whom we meet so easily in the course of the briefest outing, the woman who makes us resent our having to sacrifice them to herself, is on the contrary she whom now we would a thousand times rather possess. For the choice lies no longer between a certain pleasure—which has become by force of habit, and perhaps by the insignificance of its object, almost

nothing—and other pleasures, which tempt and thrill us, but between these latter pleasures and something that is far stronger than they, compassion for suffering.

When I vowed to myself that Albertine would be back in the house before night, I had proceeded in hot haste to cover with a fresh belief the open wound from which I had torn the belief that had been my mainstay until then. But however rapidly my instinct of self-preservation might have acted, I had, when Françoise spoke to me, been left for an instant without relief, and it was useless my knowing now that Albertine would return that same evening, the pain that I had felt in the instant in which I had not yet assured myself of her return (the instant that had followed the words: "Mademoiselle Albertine has asked for her boxes, Mademoiselle Albertine has gone"), this revived in me of its own accord as keen as it had been before, that is to say as if I had still been unaware of Albertine's immediate return. However, it was essential that she should return, but of her own accord. Upon every hypothesis, to appear to be taking the first step, to be begging her to return would be to defeat my own object. To be sure, I had not the strength to give her up as I had given up Gilberte. Even more than to see Albertine again, what I wished was to put an end to the physical anguish which my heart, less stout than of old, could endure no longer. Then, by dint of accustoming myself to not wishing anything, whether it was a question of work or of anything else, I had become more cowardly. But above all, this anguish was incomparably keener for several reasons, the most important of which was perhaps not that I had never tasted any sensual pleasure with Mme. de Guermantes or with

Gilberte, but that, not seeing them every day, and at every hour of the day, having no opportunity and consequently no need to see them, there had been less prominent, in my love for them, the immense force of Habit. Perhaps, now that my heart, incapable of wishing and of enduring of its own free will what I was suffering, found only one possible solution, that Albertine should return at all costs, perhaps the opposite solution (a deliberate renunciation, gradual resignation) would have seemed to me a novelist's solution, improbable in real life, had I not myself decided upon it in the past when Gilberte was concerned. I knew therefore that this other solution might be accepted also and by the same man, for I had remained more or less the same. Only time had played its part, time which had made me older, time which moreover had kept Albertine perpetually in my company while we were living together. But I must add that, without my giving up the idea of that life, there survived in me of all that I had felt about Gilberte the pride which made me refuse to be to Albertine a repellent plaything by insisting upon her return; I wished her to come back without my appearing to attach any importance to her return. I got out of bed, so as to lose no more time, but was arrested by my anguish; this was the first time that I had got out of bed since Albertine had left me. Yet I must dress myself at once in order to go and make inquiries of her porter.

Suffering, the prolongation of a spiritual shock that has come from without, keeps on endeavouring to change its form; we hope to be able to dispel it by making plans, by seeking information; we wish it to pass through its countless metamorphoses, this requires less courage than

retaining our suffering intact; the bed appears so narrow, hard and cold on which we lie down with our grief. I put my feet to the ground; I stepped across the room with endless precautions, took up a position from which I could not see Albertine's chair, the pianola upon the pedals of which she used to press her golden slippers, nor a single one of the things which she had used and all of which, in the secret language that my memory had imparted to them, seemed to be seeking to give me a fresh translation, a different version, to announce to me for the second time the news of her departure. But even without looking at them I could see them, my strength left me, I sank down upon one of those blue satin armchairs, the glossy surface of which an hour earlier, in the dimness of my bedroom anaesthetised by a ray of morning light, had made me dream dreams which then I had passionately caressed, which were so far from me now. Alas, I had never sat down upon any of them until this minute save when Albertine was still with me. And so I could not remain sitting there, I rose; and thus, at every moment there was one more of those innumerable and humble "selves" that compose our personality which was still unaware of Albertine's departure and must be informed of it; I was obliged—and this was more cruel than if they had been strangers and had not borrowed my sensibility to pain—to describe to all these "selves" who did not yet know of it, the calamity that had just occurred, it was necessary that each of them in turn should hear for the first time the words: "Albertine has asked for her boxes"—those coffin-shaped boxes which I had seen put on the train at Balbec with my mother's—"Albertine has gone." To each of them

I had to relate my grief, the grief which is in no way a pessimistic conclusion freely drawn from a number of lamentable circumstances, but is the intermittent and involuntary revival of a specific impression, come to us from without and not chosen by us. There were some of these "selves" which I had not encountered for a long time past. For instance (I had not remembered that it was the day on which the barber called) the "self" that I was when I was having my hair cut. I had forgotten this "self," the barber's arrival made me burst into tears, as, at a funeral, does the appearance of an old pensioned servant who has not forgotten the deceased. Then all of a sudden I recalled that, during the last week, I had from time to time been seized by panic fears which I had not confessed to myself. At such moments, however, I had debated the question, saying to myself: "Useless, of course, to consider the hypothesis of her suddenly leaving me. It is absurd. If I were to confess it to a sober, intelligent man" (and I should have done so to secure peace of mind, had not jealousy prevented me from making confidences) "he would be sure to say to me: 'Why, you are mad. It is impossible.' And, as a matter of fact, during these last days we have not quarrelled once. People separate for a reason. They tell you their reason. They give you a chance to reply. They do not run away like that. No, it is perfectly childish. It is the only hypothesis that is absurd." And yet, every day, when I found that she was still there in the morning when I rang my bell, I had heaved a vast sigh of relief. And when Françoise handed me Albertine's letter, I had at once been certain that it referred to the one thing that could not happen,

to this departure which I had in a sense perceived many days in advance, in spite of the logical reasons for my feeling reassured. I had said this to myself almost with satisfaction at my own perspicacity in my despair, like a murderer who knows that his guilt cannot be detected, but is nevertheless afraid and all of a sudden sees his victim's name written at the head of a document on the table of the police official who has sent for him. My only hope was that Albertine had gone to Touraine, to her aunt's house where, after all, she would be fairly well guarded and could not do anything very serious in the interval before I brought her back. My worst fear was that she might be remaining in Paris, or have gone to Amsterdam or to Montjouvain, in other words that she had escaped in order to involve herself in some intrigue the preliminaries of which I had failed to observe. But in reality when I said to myself Paris, Amsterdam, Montjouvain, that is to say various names of places, I was thinking of places which were merely potential. And so, when Albertine's hall porter informed me that she had gone to Touraine, this place of residence which I supposed myself to desire seemed to me the most terrible of them all, because it was real, and because, tormented for the first time by the certainty of the present and the uncertainty of the future, I pictured to myself Albertine starting upon a life which she had deliberately chosen to lead apart from myself, perhaps for a long time, perhaps for ever, and in which she would realise that unknown element which in the past had so often distressed me when, nevertheless, I had enjoyed the happiness of possessing, of caressing what was its outer shell, that charming face impenetrable and captive. It was this

unknown element that formed the core of my love. Outside the door of Albertine's house I found a poor little girl who gazed at me open-eyed and looked so honest that I asked her whether she would care to come home with me, as I might have taken home a dog with faithful eyes. She seemed pleased by my suggestion. When I got home, I held her for some time on my knee, but very soon her presence, by making me feel too keenly Albertine's absence, became intolerable. And I asked her to go away, giving her first a five-hundred franc note. And yet, a moment later, the thought of having some other little girl in the house with me, of never being alone, without the comfort of an innocent presence, was the only thing that enabled me to endure the idea that Albertine might perhaps remain away for some time before returning. As for Albertine herself, she barely existed in me save under the form of her name, which, but for certain rare moments of respite when I awoke, came and engraved itself upon my brain and continued incessantly to do so. If I had thought aloud, I should have kept on repeating it, and my speech would have been as monotonous, as limited as if I had been transformed into a bird, a bird like that in the fable whose song repeated incessantly the name of her whom, when a man, it had loved. We say the name to ourself, and as we remain silent it seems as though we inscribed it on ourself, as though it left its trace on our brain which must end by being, like a wall upon which somebody has amused himself by scribbling, entirely covered with the name, written a thousand times over, of her whom we love. We repeat it all the time in our mind, even when we are happy, all the more when we are unhappy. And to repeat this name,

which gives us nothing in addition to what we already know, we feel an incessantly renewed desire, but, in course of time, it wearies us. To carnal pleasure I did not even give a thought at this moment; I did not even see, with my mind's eye, the image of that Albertine, albeit she had been the cause of such an upheaval of my existence, I did not perceive her body and if I had wished to isolate the idea that was bound up—for there is always some idea bound up—with my suffering, it would have been alternately, on the one hand my doubt as to the intention with which she had left me, with or without any thought of returning, and on the other hand the means of bringing her back. Perhaps there is something symbolical and true in the minute place occupied in our anxiety by the person who is its cause. The fact is that the person counts for little or nothing; what is almost everything is the series of emotions, of agonies which similar mishaps have made us feel in the past in connexion with her and which habit has attached to her. What proves this clearly is, even more than the boredom which we feel in moments of happiness, that the fact of seeing or not seeing the person in question, of being or not being admired by her, of having or not having her at our disposal will seem to us utterly trivial when we shall no longer have to set ourself the problem (so superfluous that we shall no longer take the trouble to consider it) save in relation to the person herself—the series of emotions and agonies being forgotten, at least in so far as she is concerned, for it may have developed afresh but in connexion with another person. Before this, when it was still attached to her, we supposed that our happiness was dependent upon her presence; it depended merely

upon the cessation of our anxiety. Our subconscious was therefore more clairvoyant than ourself at that moment, when it made the form of the beloved woman so minute, a form which we had indeed perhaps forgotten, which we might have failed to remember clearly and thought unattractive, in the terrible drama in which finding her again in order to cease from expecting her becomes an absolutely vital matter. Minute proportions of the woman's form, a logical and necessary effect of the fashion in which love develops, a clear allegory of the subjective nature of that love.

The spirit in which Albertine had left me was similar no doubt to that of the nations who pave the way by a demonstration of their armed force for the exercise of their diplomacy. She could not have left me save in the hope of obtaining from me better terms, greater freedom, more comfort. In that case the one of us who would have conquered would have been myself, had I had the strength to await the moment when, seeing that she could gain nothing, she would return of her own accord. But if at cards, or in war, where victory alone matters, we can hold out against bluff, the conditions are not the same that are created by love and jealousy, not to mention suffering. If, in order to wait, to "hold out," I allowed Albertine to remain away from me for several days, for several weeks perhaps, I was ruining what had been my sole purpose for more than a year, never to leave her by herself for a single hour. All my precautions were rendered fruitless, if I allowed her the time, the opportunity to betray me as often as she might choose, and if in the end she did return to me, I should never again be able to forget the time when she had been

alone, and even if I won in the end, nevertheless in the past, that is to say irreparably, I should be the vanquished party.

As for the means of bringing Albertine back, they had all the more chance of success the more plausible the hypothesis appeared that she had left me only in the hope of being summoned back upon more favourable terms. And no doubt to the people who did not believe in Albertine's sincerity, certainly to Françoise for instance, this was the more plausible hypothesis. But my reason, to which the only explanation of certain bouts of ill humour, of certain attitudes had appeared, before I knew anything, to be that she had planned a final departure, found it difficult to believe that, now that her departure had occurred, it was a mere feint. I say my reason, not myself. The hypothesis of a feint became all the more necessary to me the more improbable it was, and gained in strength what it lost in probability. When we find ourself on the brink of the abyss, and it seems as though God has forsaken us, we no longer hesitate to expect a miracle of Him.

I realise that in all this I was the most apathetic, albeit the most anxious of detectives. But Albertine's flight had not restored to myself the faculties of which the habit of having her watched by other people had deprived me. I could think of one thing only: how to employ some one else upon the search for her. This other person was Saint-Loup, who agreed. The transference of the anxiety of so many days to another person filled me with joy and I quivered with the certainty of success, my hands becoming suddenly dry again as in the past, and no longer moist with that sweat in which Fran-

çoise had bathed me when she said: "Mademoiselle Albertine has gone."

The reader may remember that when I decided to live with Albertine, and even to marry her, it was in order to guard her, to know what she was doing, to prevent her from returning to her old habits with Mlle. Vinteuil. It had been in the appalling anguish caused by her revelation at Balbec when she had told me, as a thing that was quite natural, and I succeeded, albeit it was the greatest grief that I had ever yet felt in my life, in seeming to find quite natural, the thing which in my worst suppositions I had never had the audacity to imagine. (It is astonishing what a want of imagination jealousy, which spends its time in weaving little suppositions of what is untrue, shews when it is a question of discovering the truth.) Now this love, born first and foremost of a need to prevent Albertine from doing wrong, this love had preserved in the sequel the marks of its origin. Being with her mattered little to me so long as I could prevent her from "being on the run," from going to this place or to that. In order to prevent her, I had had recourse to the vigilance, to the company of the people who went about with her, and they had only to give me at the end of the day a report that was fairly reassuring for my anxieties to vanish in good humour.

Having given myself the assurance that, whatever steps I might have to take, Albertine would be back in the house that same evening, I had granted a respite to the grief which Françoise had caused me when she told me that Albertine had gone (because at that moment my mind taken by surprise had believed for an instant that her departure was final). But after an interruption,

when with an impulse of its own independent life the initial suffering revived spontaneously in me, it was just as keen as before, because it was anterior to the consoling promise that I had given myself to bring Albertine back that evening. This utterance, which would have calmed it, my suffering had not heard. To set in motion the means of bringing about her return, once again, not that such an attitude on my part would ever have proved very successful, but because I had always adopted it since I had been in love with Albertine, I was condemned to behave as though I did not love her, was not pained by her departure, I was condemned to continue to lie to her. I might be all the more energetic in my efforts to bring her back in that personally I should appear to have given her up for good. I decided to write Albertine a farewell letter in which I would regard her departure as final, while I would send Saint-Loup down to put upon Mme. Bontemps, as though without my knowledge, the most brutal pressure to make Albertine return as soon as possible. No doubt I had had experience with Gilberte of the danger of letters expressing an indifference which, feigned at first, ends by becoming genuine. And this experience ought to have restrained me from writing to Albertine letters of the same sort as those that I had written to Gilberte. But what we call experience is merely the revelation to our own eyes of a trait in our character which naturally reappears, and reappears all the more markedly because we have already brought it into prominence once of our own accord, so that the spontaneous impulse which guided us on the first occasion finds itself reinforced by all the suggestions of memory. The human plagiarism which it is most difficult to avoid,

for individuals (and even for nations which persevere in their faults and continue to aggravate them) is the plagiarism of ourself.

Knowing that Saint-Loup was in Paris I had sent for him immediately; he came in haste to my rescue, swift and efficient as he had been long ago at Doncières, and agreed to set off at once for Touraine. I suggested to him the following arrangement. He was to take the train to Chatellerault, find out where Mme. Bontemps lived, and wait until Albertine should have left the house, since there was a risk of her recognising him. "But does the girl you are speaking of know me, then?" he asked. I told him that I did not think so. This plan of action filled me with indescribable joy. It was nevertheless diametrically opposed to my original intention: to arrange things so that I should not appear to be seeking Albertine's return; whereas by so acting I must inevitably appear to be seeking it, but this plan had the inestimable advantage over "the proper thing to do" that it enabled me to say to myself that some one sent by me was going to see Albertine, and would doubtless bring her back with him. And if I had been able to read my own heart clearly at the start, I might have foreseen that it was this solution, hidden in the darkness, which I felt to be deplorable, that would ultimately prevail over the alternative course of patience which I had decided to choose, from want of will-power. As Saint-Loup already appeared slightly surprised to learn that a girl had been living with me through the whole winter without my having said a word to him about her, as moreover he had often spoken to me of the girl who had been at Balbec and I had never said in reply: "But she is living

here," he might be annoyed by my want of confidence. There was always the risk of Mme. Bontemps's mentioning Balbec to him. But I was too impatient for his departure, for his arrival at the other end, to wish, to be able to think of the possible consequences of his journey. As for the risk of his recognising Albertine (at whom he had resolutely refrained from looking when he had met her at Doncières), she had, as everyone admitted, so altered and had grown so much stouter that it was hardly likely. He asked me whether I had not a picture of Albertine. I replied at first that I had not, so that he might not have a chance, from her photograph, taken about the time of our stay at Balbec, of recognising Albertine, though he had had no more than a glimpse of her in the railway carriage. But then I remembered that in the photograph she would be already as different from the Albertine of Balbec as the living Albertine now was, and that he would recognise her no better from her photograph than in the flesh. While I was looking for it, he laid his hand gently upon my brow, by way of consoling me. I was touched by the distress which the grief that he guessed me to be feeling was causing him. For one thing, however final his rupture with Rachel, what he had felt at that time was not yet so remote that he had not a special sympathy, a special pity for this sort of suffering, as we feel ourself more closely akin to a person who is afflicted with the same malady as ourself. Besides, he had so strong an affection for myself that the thought of my suffering was intolerable to him. And so he conceived, towards her who was the cause of my suffering, a rancour mingled with admiration. He regarded me as so superior a being that he supposed

that if I were to subject myself to another person she must be indeed extraordinary. I quite expected that he would think Albertine, in her photograph, pretty, but as at the same time I did not imagine that it would produce upon him the impression that Helen made upon the Trojan elders, as I continued to look for it, I said modestly: "Oh! you know, you mustn't imagine things, for one thing it is a bad photograph, and besides there's nothing startling about her, she is not a beauty, she is merely very nice." "Oh, yes, she must be wonderful," he said with a simple, sincere enthusiasm as he sought to form a mental picture of the person who was capable of plunging me in such despair and agitation. "I am angry with her because she has hurt you, but at the same time one can't help seeing that a man who is an artist to his fingertips like you, that you, who love beauty in everything and with so passionate a love, were predestined to suffer more than the ordinary person when you found it in a woman." At last I managed to find her photograph. "She is bound to be wonderful," still came from Robert, who had not seen that I was holding out the photograph to him. All at once he caught sight of it, he held it for a moment between his hands. His face expressed a stupefaction which amounted to stupidity. "Is this the girl you are in love with?" he said at length in a tone from which astonishment was banished by his fear of making me angry. He made no remark upon it, he had assumed the reasonable, prudent, inevitably somewhat disdainful air which we assume before a sick person—even if he has been in the past a man of outstanding gifts, and our friend—who is now nothing of the sort, for, raving mad, he speaks to us of a celestial being who

has appeared to him, and continues to behold this being where we, the sane man, can see nothing but a quilt on the bed. I at once understood Robert's astonishment and that it was the same in which the sight of his mistress had plunged me, with this difference only that I had recognised in her a woman whom I already knew, whereas he supposed that he had never seen Albertine. But no doubt the difference between our respective impressions of the same person was equally great. The time was past when I had timidly begun at Balbec by adding to my visual sensations when I gazed at Albertine sensations of taste, of smell, of touch. Since then, other more profound, more pleasant, more indefinable sensations had been added to them, and afterwards painful sensations. In short, Albertine was merely, like a stone round which snow has gathered, the generating centre of an immense structure which rose above the plane of my heart. Robert, to whom all this stratification of sensations was invisible, grasped only a residue of it which it prevented me, on the contrary, from perceiving. What had disconcerted Robert when his eyes fell upon Albertine's photograph was not the consternation of the Trojan elders when they saw Helen go by and said: "All our misfortunes are not worth a single glance from her eyes," but the exactly opposite impression which may be expressed by: "What, it is for this that he has worked himself into such a state, has grieved himself so, has done so many idiotic things!" It must indeed be admitted that this sort of reaction at the sight of the person who has caused the suffering, upset the life, sometimes brought about the death of some one whom we love, is infinitely more frequent than that felt by the Trojan elders, and

is in short habitual. This is not merely because love is individual, nor because, when we do not feel it, finding it avoidable and philosophising upon the folly of other people come naturally to us. No, it is because, when it has reached the stage at which it causes such misery, the structure composed of the sensations interposed between the face of the woman and the eyes of her lover—the huge egg of pain which encases it and conceals it as a mantle of snow conceals a fountain—is already raised so high that the point at which the lover's gaze comes to rest, the point at which he finds his pleasure and his sufferings, is as far from the point which other people see as is the real sun from the place in which its condensed light enables us to see it in the sky. And what is more, during this time, beneath the chrysalis of griefs and affections which render invisible to the lover the worst metamorphoses of the beloved object, her face has had time to grow old and to change. With the result that if the face which the lover saw on the first occasion is very far removed from that which he has seen since he has been in love and has been made to suffer, it is, in the opposite direction, equally far from the face which may now be seen by the indifferent onlooker. (What would have happened if, instead of the photograph of one who was still a girl, Robert had seen the photograph of an elderly mistress?) And indeed we have no need to see for the first time the woman who has caused such an upheaval, in order to feel this astonishment. Often we know her already, as my great-uncle knew Odette. Then the optical difference extends not merely to the bodily aspect, but to the character, to the individual importance. It is more likely than not that the woman who is causing the

man who is in love with her to suffer has always behaved perfectly towards some one who was not interested in her, just as Odette who was so cruel to Swann had been the sedulous "lady in pink" to my great-uncle, or indeed that the person whose every decision is calculated in advance with as much dread as that of a deity by the man who is in love with her, appears as a person of no importance, only too glad to do anything that he may require of her, in the eyes of the man who is not in love with her, as Saint-Loup's mistress appeared to me who saw in her nothing more than that "Rachel, when from the Lord" who had so repeatedly been offered me. I recalled my own stupefaction, that first time that I met her with Saint-Loup, at the thought that anybody could be tormented by not knowing what such a woman had been doing, by the itch to know what she might have said in a whisper to some other man, why she had desired a rupture. And I felt that all this past existence—but, in this case, Albertine's—towards which every fibre of my heart, of my life was directed with a throbbing, clumsy pain, must appear just as insignificant to Saint-Loup as it would one day, perhaps, appear to myself. I felt that I would pass perhaps gradually, so far as the insignificance or gravity of Albertine's past was concerned, from the state of mind in which I was at the moment to that of Saint-Loup, for I was under no illusion as to what Saint-Loup might be thinking, as to what anyone else than the lover himself might think. And I was not unduly distressed. Let us leave pretty women to men devoid of imagination. I recalled that tragic explanation of so many of us which is furnished by an inspired but not lifelike portrait, such as Elstir's portrait

of Odette, which is a portrait not so much of a mistress as of our degrading love for her. There was lacking only what we find in so many portraits—that the painter should have been at once a great artist and a lover (and even then it was said that Elstir had been in love with Odette). This disparity, the whole life of a lover—of a lover whose acts of folly nobody understands—the whole life of a Swann goes to prove. But let the lover be embodied in a painter like Elstir and then we have the clue to the enigma, we have at length before our eyes those lips which the common herd have never perceived, that nose which nobody has ever seen, that unsuspected carriage. The portrait says: "What I have loved, what has made me suffer, what I have never ceased to behold, is this." By an inverse gymnastic, I who had made a mental effort to add to Rachel all that Saint-Loup had added to her of himself, I attempted to subtract the support of my heart and mind from the composition of Albertine and to picture her to myself as she must appear to Saint-Loup, as Rachel had appeared to me. Those differences, even though we were to observe them ourself, what importance would we attach to them? When, in the summer at Balbec, Albertine used to wait for me beneath the arcades of Incarville and spring into my carriage, not only had she not yet put on weight, she had, as a result of too much exercise, begun to waste; thin, made plainer by an ugly hat which left visible only the tip of an ugly nose, and at a side-view, pale cheeks like white slugs, I recognised very little of her, enough however to know, when she sprang into the carriage, that it was she, that she had been punctual in keeping our appointment and had not gone somewhere else; and this

was enough; what we love is too much in the past, consists too much in the time that we have spent together for us to require the whole woman; we wish only to be sure that it is she, not to be mistaken as to her identity, a thing far more important than beauty to those who are in love; her cheeks may grow hollow, her body thin, even to those who were originally most proud, in the eyes of the world, of their domination over beauty, that little tip of a nose, that sign in which is summed up the permanent personality of a woman, that algebraical formula, that constant, is sufficient to prevent a man who is courted in the highest society and is in love with her from being free upon a single evening because he is spending his evenings in brushing and entangling, until it is time to go to bed, the hair of the woman whom he loves, or simply in staying by her side, so that he may be with her or she with him, or merely that she may not be with other people.

"You are sure," Robert asked me, "that I can begin straight away by offering this woman thirty thousand francs for her husband's constituency? She is as dishonest as all that? You're sure you aren't exaggerating and that three thousand francs wouldn't be enough?" "No, I beg of you, don't try to be economical about a thing that matters so much to me. This is what you are to say to her (and it is to some extent true): 'My friend borrowed these thirty thousand francs from a relative for the election expenses of the uncle of the girl he was engaged to marry. It was because of this engagement that the money was given him. And he asked me to bring it to you so that Albertine should know nothing about it. And now Albertine goes and leaves him.

He doesn't know what to do. He is obliged to pay back the thirty thousand francs if he does not marry Albertine. And if he is going to marry her, then if only to keep up appearances she ought to return immediately, because it will look so bad if she stays away for long.' You think I've made all this up?" "Not at all," Saint-Loup assured me out of consideration for myself, out of discretion, and also because he knew that truth is often stranger than fiction. After all, it was by no means impossible that in this tale of the thirty thousand francs there might be, as I had told him, a large element of truth. It was possible, but it was not true and this element of truth was in fact a lie. But we lied to each other, Robert and I, as in every conversation when one friend is genuinely anxious to help another who is desperately in love. The friend who is being counsellor, prop, comforter, may pity the other's distress but cannot share it, and the kinder he is to him the more he has to lie. And the other confesses to him as much as is necessary in order to secure his help, but, simply perhaps in order to secure that help, conceals many things from him. And the happy one of the two is, when all is said, he who takes trouble, goes on a journey, executes a mission, but feels no anguish in his heart. I was at this moment the person that Robert had been at Doncières when he thought that Rachel had abandoned him. "Very well, just as you like; if I get my head bitten off, I accept the snub in advance for your sake. And even if it does seem a bit queer to make such an open bargain, I know that in our own set there are plenty of duchesses, even the most stuffy of them, who if you offered them thirty thousand francs would do things far more difficult than telling their nieces

not to stay in Touraine. Anyhow I am doubly glad to be doing you a service, since that is the only reason that will make you consent to see me. If I marry," he went on, "don't you think we might see more of one another, won't you look upon my house as your own. . . ." He stopped short, the thought having suddenly occurred to him (as I supposed at the time) that, if I too were to marry, his wife would not be able to make an intimate friend of Albertine. And I remembered what the Cambremers had said to me as the probability of his marrying a niece of the Prince de Guermantes. He consulted the time-table, and found that he could not leave Paris until the evening. Françoise inquired: "Am I to take Mlle. Albertine's bed out of the study?" "Not at all," I said, "you must leave everything ready for her." I hoped that she would return any day and did not wish Françoise to suppose that there could be any doubt of her return. Albertine's departure must appear to have been arranged between ourselves, and not in any way to imply that she loved me less than before. But Françoise looked at me with an air, if not of incredulity, at any rate of doubt. She too had her alternative hypotheses. Her nostrils expanded, she could scent the quarrel, she must have felt it in the air for a long time past. And if she was not absolutely sure of it, this was perhaps because, like myself, she would hesitate to believe unconditionally what would have given her too much pleasure. Now the burden of the affair rested no longer upon my overwrought mind but upon Saint-Loup. I became quite light-hearted because I had made a decision, because I could say to myself: "I haven't lost any time, I have acted." Saint-Loup can barely have been in the train

when in the hall I ran into Bloch, whose ring I had not heard, and so was obliged to let him stay with me for a minute. He had met me recently with Albertine (whom he had known at Balbec) on a day when she was in a bad humour. "I met M. Bontemps at dinner," he told me, "and as I have a certain influence over him, I told him that I was grieved that his niece was not nicer to you, that he must make entreaties to her in that connexion." I boiled with rage; these entreaties, this compassion destroyed the whole effect of Saint-Loup's intervention and brought me into direct contact with Albertine herself whom I now seemed to be imploring to return. To make matters worse, Françoise, who was lingering in the hall, could hear every word. I heaped every imaginable reproach upon Bloch, telling him that I had never authorised him to do anything of the sort and that, besides, the whole thing was nonsense. Bloch, from that moment, continued to smile, less, I imagine, from joy than from self-consciousness at having made me angry. He laughingly expressed his surprise at having provoked such anger. Perhaps he said this hoping to minimise in my mind the importance of his indiscreet intervention, perhaps it was because he was of a cowardly nature, and lived gaily and idly in an atmosphere of falsehood, as jelly-fish float upon the surface of the sea, perhaps because, even if he had not been of a different race, as other people can never place themselves at our point of view, they do not realise the magnitude of the injury that words uttered at random can do us. I had barely shewn him out, unable to think of any remedy for the mischief that he had done, when the bell rang again and Françoise brought me a summons from the head of the Sûreté. The parents of the

little girl whom I had brought into the house for an hour had decided to lodge a complaint against me for corruption of a child under the age of consent. There are moments in life when a sort of beauty is created by the multiplicity of the troubles that assail us, intertwined like Wagnerian *leitmotiv,* from the idea also, which then emerges, that events are not situated in the content of the reflexions portrayed in the wretched little mirror which the mind holds in front of it and which is called the future, that they are somewhere outside, and spring up as suddenly as a person who comes to accuse us of a crime. Even when left to itself, an event becomes modified, whether frustration amplifies it for us or satisfaction reduces it. But it is rarely unaccompanied. The feelings aroused by each event contradict one another, and there comes to a certain extent, as I felt when on my way to the head of the Sûreté, an at least momentary revulsion which is as provocative of sentimental misery as fear. I found at the Sûreté the girl's parents who insulted me by saying: "We don't eat this sort of bread," and handed me back the five hundred francs which I declined to take, and the head of the Sûreté who, setting himself the inimitable example of the judicial facility in repartee, took hold of a word from each sentence that I uttered, a word which enabled him to make a witty and crushing retort. My innocence of the alleged crime was never taken into consideration, for that was the sole hypothesis which nobody was willing to accept for an instant. Nevertheless the difficulty of a conviction enabled me to escape with an extremely violent reprimand, while the parents were in the room. But as soon as they had gone, the head of the Sûreté, who had a weakness for little girls, changed

his tone and admonished me as one man to another: "Next time, you must be more careful. Gad, you can't pick them up as easily as that, or you'll get into trouble. Anyhow, you can find dozens of girls better than that one, and far cheaper. It was a perfectly ridiculous amount to pay." I felt him to be so incapable of understanding me if I attempted to tell him the truth that without saying a word I took advantage of his permission to withdraw. Every passer-by, until I was safely at home, seemed to me an inspector appointed to spy upon my behaviour. But this *leitmotiv,* like that of my anger with Bloch, died away, leaving the field clear for that of Albertine's departure. And this took its place once more, but in an almost joyous tone now that Saint-Loup had started. Now that he had undertaken to go and see Mme. Bontemps, my sufferings had been dispelled. I believed that this was because I had taken action, I believed it sincerely, for we never know what we conceal in our heart of hearts. What really made me happy was not, as I supposed, that I had transferred my load of indecisions to Saint-Loup. I was not, for that matter, entirely wrong; the specific remedy for an unfortunate event (and three events out of four are unfortunate) is a decision; for its effect is that, by a sudden reversal of our thoughts, it interrupts the flow of those that come from the past event and prolong its vibration, and breaks that flow with a contrary flow of contrary thoughts, come from without, from the future. But these new thoughts are most of all beneficial to us when (and this was the case with the thoughts that assailed me at this moment), from the heart of that future, it is a hope that they bring us. What really made me so happy was the secret cer-

tainty that Saint-Loup's mission could not fail, Albertine was bound to return. I realised this; for not having received, on the following day, any answer from Saint-Loup, I began to suffer afresh. My decision, my transference to him of full power of action, were not therefore the cause of my joy, which, in that case, would have persisted; but rather the "Success is certain" which had been in my mind when I said: "Come what may." And the thought aroused by his delay, that, after all, his mission might not prove successful, was so hateful to me that I had lost my gaiety. It is in reality our anticipation, our hope of happy events that fills us with a joy which we ascribe to other causes and which ceases, letting us relapse into misery, if we are no longer so assured that what we desire will come to pass. It is always this invisible belief that sustains the edifice of our world of sensation, deprived of which it rocks from its foundations. We have seen that it created for us the merit or unimportance of other people, our excitement or boredom at seeing them. It creates similarly the possibility of enduring a grief which seems to us trivial, simply because we are convinced that it will presently be brought to an end, or its sudden enlargement until the presence of a certain person matters as much as, possibly more than our life itself. One thing however succeeded in making my heartache as keen as it had been at the first moment and (I am bound to admit) no longer was. This was when I read over again a passage in Albertine's letter. It is all very well our loving people, the pain of losing them, when in our isolation we are confronted with it alone, to which our mind gives, to a certain extent, whatever form it chooses, this pain is endurable and different

from that other pain less human, less our own, as unforeseen and unusual as an accident in the moral world and in the region of our heart, which is caused not so much by the people themselves as by the manner in which we have learned that we are not to see them again. Albertine, I might think of her with gentle tears, accepting the fact that I should not be able to see her again this evening as I had seen her last night, but when I read over again: "my decision is irrevocable," that was another matter, it was like taking a dangerous drug which might give me a heart attack which I could not survive. There is in inanimate objects, in events, in farewell letters a special danger which amplifies and even alters the nature of the grief that people are capable of causing us. But this pain did not last long. I was, when all was said, so sure of Saint-Loup's skill, of his eventual success, Albertine's return seemed to me so certain that I asked myself whether I had had any reason to hope for it. Nevertheless, I rejoiced at the thought. Unfortunately for myself, who supposed the business with the Sûreté to be over and done with, Françoise came in to tell me that an inspector had called to inquire whether I was in the habit of having girls in the house, that the porter, supposing him to refer to Albertine, had replied in the affirmative, and that from that moment it had seemed that the house was being watched. In future it would be impossible for me ever to bring a little girl into the house to console me in my grief, without the risk of being put to shame in her eyes by the sudden intrusion of an inspector, and of her regarding me as a criminal. And at the same instant I realised how far more we live for certain ideas than we suppose, for this impossibility

of my ever taking a little girl on my knee again seemed to me to destroy all the value of my life, but what was more I understood how comprehensible it is that people will readily refuse wealth and risk their lives, whereas we imagine that pecuniary interest and the fear of death rule the world. For if I had thought that even a little girl who was a complete stranger might, by the arrival of a policeman, be given a bad impression of myself, how much more readily would I have committed suicide. And yet there was no possible comparison between the two degrees of suffering. Now in everyday life we never bear in mind that the people to whom we offer money, whom we threaten to kill, may have mistresses or merely friends, to whose esteem they attach importance, not to mention their own self-respect. But, all of a sudden, by a confusion of which I was not aware (I did not in fact remember that Albertine, being of full age, was free to live under my roof and even to be my mistress), it seemed to me that the charge of corrupting minors might include Albertine also. Thereupon my life appeared to me to be hedged in on every side. And when I thought that I had not lived chastely with her, I found in the punishment that had been inflicted upon me for having forced an unknown little girl to accept money, that relation which almost always exists in human sanctions, the effect of which is that there is hardly ever either a fair sentence or a judicial error, but a sort of compromise between the false idea that the judge forms of an innocent action and the culpable deeds of which he is unaware. But then when I thought that Albertine's return might involve me in the scandal of a sentence which would degrade me in her eyes and would perhaps do her, too, an injury which she would

not forgive me, I ceased to look forward to her return, it terrified me. I would have liked to telegraph to her not to come back. And immediately, drowning everything else, the passionate desire for her return overwhelmed me. The fact was that having for an instant considered the possibility of telling her not to return and of living without her, all of a sudden I felt myself on the contrary ready to abandon all travel, all pleasure, all work, if only Albertine might return! Ah, how my love for Albertine, the course of which I had supposed that I could foretell, on the analogy of my previous love for Gilberte, had developed in an entirely opposite direction! How impossible it was for me to live without seeing her! And with each of my actions, even the most trivial, since they had all been steeped before in the blissful atmosphere which was Albertine's presence, I was obliged in turn, with a fresh expenditure of energy, with the same grief, to begin again the apprenticeship of separation. Then the competition of other forms of life thrust this latest grief into the background, and, during those days which were the first days of spring, I even found, as I waited until Saint-Loup should have seen Mme. Bontemps, in imagining Venice and beautiful, unknown women, a few moments of pleasing calm. As soon as I was conscious of this, I felt in myself a panic terror. This calm which I had just enjoyed was the first apparition of that great occasional force which was to wage war in me against grief, against love, and would in the end prove victorious. This state of which I had just had a foretaste and had received the warning, was, for a moment only, what would in time to come be my permanent state, a life in which I should no longer be able to suffer on

account of Albertine, in which I should no longer be in love with her. And my love, which had just seen and recognised the one enemy by whom it could be conquered, forgetfulness, began to tremble, like a lion which in the cage in which it has been confined has suddenly caught sight of the python that is about to devour it.

I thought of Albertine all the time and never was Françoise, when she came into my room, quick enough in saying: "There are no letters," to curtail my anguish. From time to time I succeeded, by letting some current or other of ideas flow through my grief, in refreshing, in aerating to some slight extent the vitiated atmosphere of my heart; but at night, if I succeeded in going to sleep, then it was as though the memory of Albertine had been the drug that had procured my sleep, whereas the cessation of its influence would awaken me. I thought all the time of Albertine while I was asleep. It was a special sleep of her own that she gave me, and one in which, moreover, I should no longer have been at liberty, as when awake, to think of other things. Sleep and the memory of her were the two substances which I must mix together and take at one draught in order to put myself to sleep. When I was awake, moreover, my suffering went on increasing day by day instead of diminishing, not that oblivion was not performing its task, but because by the very fact of its doing so it favoured the idealisation of the regretted image and thereby the assimilation of my initial suffering to other analogous sufferings which intensified it. Still this image was endurable. But if all of a sudden I thought of her room, of her room in which the bed stood empty, of her piano, her motor-car, I lost all my strength, I shut my eyes, let

my head droop upon my shoulder like a person who is about to faint. The sound of doors being opened hurt me almost as much because it was not she that was opening them.

When it was possible that a telegram might have come from Saint-Loup, I dared not ask: "Is there a telegram?" At length one did come, but brought with it only a postponement of any result, with the message: "The ladies have gone away for three days." No doubt, if I had endured the four days that had already elapsed since her departure, it was because I said to myself: "It is only a matter of time, by the end of the week she will be here." But this argument did not alter the fact that for my heart, for my body, the action to be performed was the same: living without her, returning home and not finding her in the house, passing the door of her room—as for opening it, I had not yet the courage to do that—knowing that she was not inside, going to bed without having said good night to her, such were the tasks that my heart had been obliged to accomplish in their terrible entirety, and for all the world as though I had not been going to see Albertine. But the fact that my heart had already performed this daily task four times proved that it was now capable of continuing to perform it. And soon, perhaps, the consideration which helped me to go on living in this fashion—the prospect of Albertine's return—I should cease to feel any need of it (I should be able to say to myself: "She is never coming back," and remain alive all the same as I had already been living for the last four days), like a cripple who has recovered the use of his feet and can dispense with his crutches. No doubt when I came home at night I still

found, taking my breath away, stifling me in the vacuum of solitude, the memories placed end to end in an interminable series of all the evenings upon which Albertine had been waiting for me; but already I found in this series my memory of last night, of the night before and of the two previous evenings, that is to say the memory of the four nights that had passed since Albertine's departure, during which I had remained without her, alone, through which nevertheless I had lived, four nights already, forming a string of memories that was very slender compared with the other, but to which every new day would perhaps add substance. I shall say nothing of the letter conveying a declaration of affection which I received at this time from a niece of Mme. de Guermantes, considered the prettiest girl in Paris, nor of the overtures made to me by the Duc de Guermantes on behalf of her parents, resigned, in their anxiety to secure their daughter's happiness, to the inequality of the match, to an apparent misalliance. Such incidents which might prove gratifying to our self-esteem are too painful when we are in love. We feel a desire, but shrink from the indelicacy of communicating them to her who has a less flattering opinion of us, nor would that opinion be altered by the knowledge that we are able to inspire one that is very different. What the Duke's niece wrote to me could only have made Albertine angry. From the moment of waking, when I picked my grief up again at the point which I had reached when I fell asleep, like a book which had been shut for a while but which I would keep before my eyes until night, it could be only with some thought relating to Albertine that all my sensation would be brought into harmony, whether it came to me from without or from

within. The bell rang: it is a letter from her, it is she herself perhaps! If I felt myself in better health, not too miserable, I was no longer jealous, I no longer had any grievance against her, I would have liked to see her at once, to kiss her, to live happily with her ever after. The act of telegraphing to her: "Come at once" seemed to me to have become a perfectly simple thing, as though my fresh mood had changed not merely my inclinations but things external to myself, had made them more easy. If I was in a sombre mood, all my anger with her revived, I no longer felt any desire to kiss her, I felt how impossible it was that she could ever make me happy, I sought only to do her harm and to prevent her from belonging to other people. But these two opposite moods had an identical result: it was essential that she should return as soon as possible. And yet, however keen my joy at the moment of her return, I felt that very soon the same difficulties would crop up again and that to seek happiness in the satisfaction of a moral desire was as fatuous as to attempt to reach the horizon by walking straight ahead. The farther the desire advances, the farther does true possession withdraw. So that if happiness or at least freedom from suffering can be found it is not the satisfaction, but the gradual reduction, the eventual extinction of our desire that we must seek. We attempt to see the person whom we love, we ought to attempt not to see her, oblivion alone brings about an ultimate extinction of desire. And I imagine that if an author were to publish truths of this sort he would dedicate the book that contained them to a woman to whom he would thus take pleasure in returning, saying to her: "This book is yours." And thus, while telling the truth

in his book, he would be lying in his dedication, for he will attach to the book's being hers only the importance that he attaches to the stone that came to him from her which will remain precious to him only so long as he is in love with her. The bonds that unite another person to ourself exist only in our mind. Memory as it grows fainter relaxes them, and notwithstanding the illusion by which we would fain be cheated and with which, out of love, friendship, politeness, deference, duty, we cheat other people, we exist alone. Man is the creature that cannot emerge from himself, that knows his fellows only in himself; when he asserts the contrary, he is lying. And I should have been in such terror (had there been anyone capable of taking it) of somebody's robbing me of this need of her, this love for her, that I convinced myself that it had a value in my life. To be able to hear uttered, without being either fascinated or pained by them, the names of the stations through which the train passed on its way to Touraine, would have seemed to me a diminution of myself (for no other reason really than that it would have proved that Albertine was ceasing to interest me); it was just as well, I told myself, that by incessantly asking myself what she could be doing, thinking, longing, at every moment, whether she intended, whether she was going to return, I should be keeping open that communicating door which love had installed in me, and feeling another person's mind flood through open sluices the reservoir which must not again become stagnant. Presently, as Saint-Loup remained silent, a subordinate anxiety—my expectation of a further telegram, of a telephone call from him—masked the other, my uncertainty as to the result, whether Albertine was going to return. Listening

for every sound in expectation of the telegram became so intolerable that I felt that, whatever might be its contents, the arrival of the telegram, which was the only thing of which I could think at the moment, would put an end to my sufferings. But when at length I had received a telegram from Robert in which he informed me that he had seen Mme. Bontemps, but that, notwithstanding all his precautions, Albertine had seen him, and that this had upset everything, I burst out in a torrent of fury and despair, for this was what I would have done anything in the world to prevent. Once it came to Albertine's knowledge, Saint-Loup's mission gave me an appearance of being dependent upon her which could only dissuade her from returning, my horror of which was, as it happened, all that I had retained of the pride that my love had boasted in Gilberte's day and had since lost. I cursed Robert. Then I told myself that, if this attempt had failed, I would try another. Since man is able to influence the outer world, how, if I brought into play cunning, intelligence, pecuniary advantage, affection, should I fail to succeed in destroying this appalling fact: Albertine's absence. We believe that according to our desire we are able to change the things round about us, we believe this because otherwise we can see no favourable solution. We forget the solution that generally comes to pass and is also favourable: we do not succeed in changing things according to our desire, but gradually our desire changes. The situation that we hoped to change because it was intolerable becomes unimportant. We have not managed to surmount the obstacle, as we were absolutely determined to do, but life has taken us round it, led us past it, and then if we turn round to gaze

at the remote past, we can barely catch sight of it, so imperceptible has it become. In the flat above ours, one of the neighbours was strumming songs. I applied their words, which I knew, to Albertine and myself, and was stirred by so profound a sentiment that I began to cry. The words were:

> "Hélas, l'oiseau qui fuit ce qu'il croit l'esclavage,
> d'un vol désespéré revient battre au vitrage"

and the death of Manon:

> "Manon, réponds-moi donc,
> Seul amour de mon âme, je n'ai su qu'aujourd'hui
> la bonté de ton cœur."

Since Manon returned to Des Grieux, it seemed to me that I was to Albertine the one and only love of her life. Alas, it is probable that, if she had been listening at that moment to the same air, it would not have been myself that she would have cherished under the name of Des Grieux, and, even if the idea had occurred to her, the memory of myself would have checked her emotion on hearing this music, albeit it was, although better and more distinguished, just the sort of music that she admired. As for myself, I had not the courage to abandon myself to so pleasant a train of thought, to imagine Albertine calling me her "heart's only love" and realising that she had been mistaken over what she "had thought to be bondage." I knew that we can never read a novel without giving its heroine the form and features of the woman with whom we are in love. But be the ending as happy as it may, our love has not advanced an inch and, when we have shut the book, she whom we love

and who has come to us at last in its pages, loves us no better in real life. In a fit of fury, I telegraphed to Saint-Loup to return as quickly as possible to Paris, so as to avoid at least the appearance of an aggravating insistence upon a mission which I had been so anxious to keep secret. But even before he had returned in obedience to my instructions it was from Albertine herself that I received the following letter:

"My dear, you have sent your friend Saint-Loup to my aunt, which was foolish. My dear boy, if you needed me why did you not write to me myself, I should have been only too delighted to come back, do not let us have any more of these absurd complications." "I should have been only too delighted to come back!" If she said this, it must mean that she regretted her departure, and was only seeking an excuse to return. So that I had merely to do what she said, to write to her that I needed her, and she would return.

I was going, then, to see her again, her, the Albertine of Balbec (for since her departure this was what she had once more become to me; like a sea-shell to which we cease to pay any attention while we have it on the chest of drawers in our room, once we have parted with it, either by giving it away or by losing it, and begin to think about it, a thing which we had ceased to do, she recalled to me all the joyous beauty of the blue mountains of the sea). And it was not only she that had become a creature of the imagination, that is to say desirable, life with her had become an imaginary life, that is to a life set free from all difficulties, so that I said to myself: "How happy we are going to be!" But, now that I was assured of her return, I must not appear to be seek-

ing to hasten it, but must on the contrary efface the bad impression left by Saint-Loup's intervention, which I could always disavow later on by saying that he had acted upon his own initiative, because he had always been in favour of our marriage. Meanwhile, I read her letter again, and was nevertheless disappointed when I saw how little there is of a person in a letter. Doubtless the characters traced on the paper express our thoughts, as do also our features: it is still a thought of some kind that we see before us. But all the same, in the person, the thought is not apparent to us until it has been diffused through the expanded water-lily of her face. This modifies it considerably. And it is perhaps one of the causes of our perpetual disappointments in love, this perpetual deviation which brings it about that, in response to our expectation of the ideal person with whom we are in love, each meeting provides us with a person in flesh and blood in whom there is already so little trace of our dream. And then when we demand something of this person, we receive from her a letter in which even of the person very little remains, as in the letters of an algebraical formula there no longer remains the precise value of the arithmetical ciphers, which themselves do not contain the qualities of the fruit or flowers that they enumerate. And yet love, the beloved object, her letters, are perhaps nevertheless translations (unsatisfying as it may be to pass from one to the other) of the same reality, since the letter seems to us inadequate only while we are reading it, but we have been sweating blood until its arrival, and it is sufficient to calm our anguish, if not to appease, with its tiny black symbols, our desire which

knows that it contains after all only the equivalent of a word, a smile, a kiss, not the things themselves.

I wrote to Albertine:

"My dear, I was just about to write to you, and I thank you for telling me that if I had been in need of you you would have come at once; it is like you to have so exalted a sense of devotion to an old friend, which can only increase my regard for you. But no, I did not ask and I shall not ask you to return; our meeting—for a long time to come—might not be painful, perhaps, to you, a heartless girl. To me whom at times you have thought so cold, it would be most painful. Life has driven us apart. You have made a decision which I consider very wise, and which you have made at the right moment, with a marvellous presentiment, for you left me on the day on which I had just received my mother's consent to my asking you to marry me. I would have told you this when I awoke, when I received her letter (at the same moment as yours). Perhaps you would have been afraid of distressing me by leaving immediately after that. And we should perhaps have united our lives in what would have been for us (who knows?) misery. If this is what was in store for us, then I bless you for your wisdom. We should lose all the fruit of it were we to meet again. This is not to say that I should not find it a temptation. But I claim no great credit for resisting it. You know what an inconstant person I am and how quickly I forget. You have told me often, I am first and foremost a man of habit. The habits which I am beginning to form in your absence are not as yet very strong. Naturally, at this moment, the habits that I had when you were with me, habits

which your departure has upset, are still the stronger. They will not remain so for very long. For that reason, indeed, I had thought of taking advantage of these last few days in which our meeting would not yet be for me what it will be in a fortnight's time, perhaps even sooner (forgive my frankness): a disturbance,—I had thought of taking advantage of them, before the final oblivion, in order to settle certain little material questions with you, in which you might, as a good and charming friend, have rendered a service to him who for five minutes imagined himself your future husband. As I never expected that my mother would approve, as on the other hand I desired that we should each of us enjoy all that liberty of which you had too generously and abundantly made a sacrifice which might be admissible had we been living together for a few weeks, but would have become as hateful to you as to myself now that we were to spend the rest of our lives together (it almost hurts me to think as I write to you that this nearly happened, that the news came only a moment too late), I had thought of organising our existence in the most independent manner possible, and, to begin with, I wished you to have that yacht in which you could go cruising while I, not being well enough to accompany you, would wait for you at the port (I had written to Elstir to ask for his advice, since you admire his taste), and on land I wished you to have a motor-car to yourself, for your very own, in which you could go out, could travel wherever you chose. The yacht was almost ready; it is named, after a wish that you expressed at Balbec, *le Cygne*. And remembering that your favourite make of car was the Rolls, I had ordered one. But now that we

are never to meet again, as I have no hope of persuading you to accept either the vessel or the car (to me they would be quite useless), I had thought—as I had ordered them through an agent, but in your name—that you might perhaps by countermanding them, yourself, save me the expense of the yacht and the car which are no longer required. But this, and many other matters, would need to be discussed. Well, I find that so long as I am capable of falling in love with you again, which will not be for long, it would be madness, for the sake of a sailing-vessel and a Rolls-Royce, to meet again and to risk the happiness of your life since you have decided that it lies in your living apart from myself. No, I prefer to keep the Rolls and even the yacht. And as I shall make no use of them and they are likely to remain for ever, one in its dock, dismantled, the other in its garage, I shall have engraved upon the yacht (Heavens, I am afraid of misquoting the title and committing a heresy which would shock you) those lines of Mallarmé which you used to like:

> **Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui**
> **Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre**
> **Pour n'avoir pas chanté la région où vivre**
> **Quand du stérile hiver a resplendi l'ennui.**

You remember—it is the poem that begins:

> **Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui . . . .**

Alas, to-day is no longer either virginal or fair. But the men who know, as I know, that they will very soon make of it an endurable "to-morrow" are seldom *endurable* themselves. As for the Rolls, it would deserve

rather those other lines of the same poet which you said you could not understand:

> Dis si je ne suis pas joyeux
> Tonnerre et rubis aux moyeux
> De voir en l'air que ce feu troue
>
> Avec des royaumes épars
> Comme mourir pourpre la roue
> Du seul vespéral de mes chars.

Farewell for ever, my little Albertine, and thanks once again for the charming drive which we took on the eve of our parting. I retain a very pleasant memory of it.

P.S. I make no reference to what you tell me of the alleged suggestions which Saint-Loup (whom I do not for a moment believe to be in Touraine) may have made to your aunt. It is just like a Sherlock Holmes story. For what do you take me?"

No doubt, just as I had said in the past to Albertine: "I am not in love with you," in order that she might love me; "I forget people when I do not see them," in order that she might come often to see me; "I have decided to leave you," in order to forestall any idea of a parting, now it was because I was absolutely determined that she must return within a week that I said to her: "Farewell for ever"; it was because I wished to see her again that I said to her: "I think it would be dangerous to see you"; it was because living apart from her seemed to me worse than death that I wrote to her: "You were right, we should be wretched together." Alas, this false letter, when I wrote it in order to appear not to be dependent upon her and also to enjoy the pleasure of saying certain things which could arouse emo-

tion only in myself and not in her, I ought to have foreseen from the start that it was possible that it would result in a negative response, that is to say one which confirmed what I had said; that this was indeed probable, for even had Albertine been less intelligent than she was, she would never have doubted for an instant that what I said to her was untrue. Indeed without pausing to consider the intentions that I expressed in this letter, the mere fact of my writing it, even if it had not been preceded by Saint-Loup's intervention, was enough to prove to her that I desired her return and to prompt her to let me become more and more inextricably ensnared. Then, having foreseen the possibility of a reply in the negative, I ought also to have foreseen that this reply would at once revive in its fullest intensity my love for Albertine. And I ought, still before posting my letter, to have asked myself whether, in the event of Albertine's replying in the same tone and refusing to return, I should have sufficient control over my grief to force myself to remain silent, not to telegraph to her: "Come back," not to send her some other messenger, which, after I had written to her that we would not meet again, would make it perfectly obvious that I could not get on without her, and would lead to her refusing more emphatically than ever, whereupon I, unable to endure my anguish for another moment, would go down to visit her and might, for all I knew, be refused admission. And, no doubt, this would have been, after three enormous blunders, the worst of all, after which there would be nothing left but to take my life in front of her house. But the disastrous manner in which the psychopathic universe is constructed has decreed that the clumsy action, the ac-

tion which we ought most carefully to have avoided, should be precisely the action that will calm us, the action that, opening before us, until we learn its result, fresh avenues of hope, relieves us for the moment of the intolerable pain which a refusal has aroused in us. With the result that, when the pain is too keen, we dash headlong into the blunder that consists in writing, sending somebody to intercede, going in person, proving that we cannot get on without the woman we love. But I foresaw nothing of all this. The probable result of my letter seemed to me on the contrary to be that of making Albertine return to me at once. And so, as I thought of this result, I greatly enjoyed writing the letter. But at the same time I had not ceased, while writing it, from shedding tears; partly, at first, in the same way as upon the day when I had acted a pretence of separation, because, as the words represented for me the idea which they expressed to me, albeit they were aimed in the opposite direction (uttered mendaciously because my pride forbade me to admit that I was in love), they carried their own load of sorrow. But also because I felt that the idea contained a grain of truth.

As this letter seemed to me to be certain of its effect, I began to regret that I had sent it. For as I pictured to myself the return (so natural, after all,), of Albertine, immediately all the reasons which made our marriage a thing disastrous to myself returned in their fullest force. I hoped that she would refuse to come back. I was engaged in calculating that my liberty, my whole future depended upon her refusal, that I had been mad to write to her, that I ought to have retrieved my letter which, alas, had gone, when Françoise, with the newspaper which

she had just brought upstairs, handed it back to me. She was not certain how many stamps it required. But immediately I changed my mind; I hoped that Albertine would not return, but I wished the decision to come from her, so as to put an end to my anxiety, and I handed the letter back to Françoise. I opened the newspaper; it announced a performance by Berma. Then I remembered the two different attitudes in which I had listened to *Phèdre,* and it was now in a third attitude that I thought of the declaration scene. It seemed to me that what I had so often repeated to myself, and had heard recited in the theatre, was the statement of the laws of which I must make experience in my life. There are in our soul things to which we do not realise how strongly we are attached. Or else, if we live without them, it is because we put off from day to day, from fear of failure, or of being made to suffer, entering into possession of them. This was what had happened to me in the case of Gilberte when I thought that I had given her up. If before the moment in which we are entirely detached from these things—a moment long subsequent to that in which we suppose ourself to have been detached from them—the girl with whom we are in love becomes, for instance, engaged to some one else, we are mad, we can no longer endure the life which appeared to us to be so sorrowfully calm. Or else, if we are in control of the situation, we feel that she is a burden, we would gladly be rid of her. Which was what had happened to me in the case of Albertine. But let a sudden departure remove the unloved creature from us, we are unable to survive. But did not the plot of *Phèdre* combine these two cases? Hippolyte is about to leave. Phèdre, who until then has taken

care to court his hostility, from a scruple of conscience, she says, or rather the poet makes her say, because she is unable to foresee the consequences and feels that she is not loved, Phèdre can endure the situation no longer. She comes to him to confess her love, and this was the scene which I had so often repeated to myself:

On dit qu'un prompt départ vous éloigne de nous. . . .

Doubtless this reason for the departure of Hippolyte is less decisive, we may suppose, than the death of Thésée. And similarly when, a few lines farther on, Phèdre pretends for a moment that she has been misunderstood:

Aurais-je perdu tout le soin de ma gloire?

we may suppose that it is because Hippolyte has repulsed her declaration.

Madame, oubliez-vous
Que Thésée est mon père, et qu'il est votre époux?

But there would not have been this indignation unless, in the moment of a consummated bliss, Phèdre could have had the same feeling that it amounted to little or nothing. Whereas, as soon as she sees that it is not to be consummated, that Hippolyte thinks that he has misunderstood her and makes apologies, then, like myself when I decided to give my letter back to Françoise, she decides that the refusal must come from him, decides to stake everything upon his answer:

Ah! cruel, tu m'as trop entendue.

And there is nothing, not even the harshness with which, as I had been told, Swann had treated Odette, or I myself had treated Albertine, a harshness which substituted for

the original love a new love composed of pity, emotion, of the need of effusion, which is only a variant of the former love, that is not to be found also in this scene:

> Tu me haïssais plus, je ne t'aimais pas moins.
> Tes malheurs te prêtaient encor de nouveaux charmes.

What proves that it is not to the "thought of her own fame" that Phèdre attaches most importance is that she would forgive Hippolyte and turn a deaf ear to the advice of Oenone had she not learned at the same instant that Hippolyte was in love with Aricie. So it is that jealousy, which in love is equivalent to the loss of all happiness, outweighs any loss of reputation. It is then that she allows Oenone (which is merely a name for the baser part of herself) to slander Hippolyte without taking upon herself the "burden of his defence" and thus sends the man who will have none of her to a fate the calamities of which are no consolation, however, to herself, since her own suicide follows immediately upon the death of Hippolyte. Thus at least it was, with a diminution of the part played by all the "Jansenist scruples," as Bergotte would have said, which Racine ascribed to Phèdre to make her less guilty, that this scene appeared to me, a sort of prophecy of the amorous episodes in my own life. These reflexions had, however, altered nothing of my determination, and I handed my letter to Françoise so that she might post it after all, in order to carry into effect that appeal to Albertine which seemed to me to be indispensable, now that I had learned that my former attempt had failed. And no doubt we are wrong when we suppose that the accomplishment of our desire is a small matter, since as soon as we believe that it cannot

be realised we become intent upon it once again, and decide that it was not worth our while to pursue it only when we are quite certain that our attempt will not fail. And yet we are right also. For if this accomplishment, if our happiness appear of small account only in the light of certainty, nevertheless they are an unstable element from which only trouble can arise. And our trouble will be all the greater the more completely our desire will have been accomplished, all the more impossible to endure when our happiness has been, in defiance of the law of nature, prolonged for a certain period, when it has received the consecration of habit. In another sense as well, these two tendencies, by which I mean that which made me anxious that my letter should be posted, and, when I thought that it had gone, my regret that I had written it, have each of them a certain element of truth. In the case of the first, it is easily comprehensible that we should go in pursuit of our happiness—or misery—and that at the same time we should hope to keep before us, by this latest action which is about to involve us in its consequences, a state of expectancy which does not leave us in absolute despair, in a word that we should seek to convert into other forms, which, we imagine, must be less painful to us, the malady from which we are suffering. But the other tendency is no less important, for, born of our belief in the successs of our enterprise, it is simply an anticipation of the disappointment which we should very soon feel in the presence of a satisfied desire, our regret at having fixed for ourself, at the expense of other forms which are necessarily excluded, this form of happiness. I had given my letter to Françoise and had asked her to go out at once and post it. As soon as the

letter had gone, I began once more to think of Albertine's return as imminent. It did not fail to introduce into my mind certain pleasing images which neutralised somewhat by their attractions the dangers that I foresaw in her return. The pleasure, so long lost, of having her with me was intoxicating.

Time passes, and gradually everything that we have said in falsehood becomes true; I had learned this only too well with Gilberte; the indifference that I had feigned when I could never restrain my tears had ended by becoming real; gradually life, as I told Gilberte in a lying formula which retrospectively had become true, life had driven us apart. I recalled this, I said to myself: "If Albertine allows an interval to elapse, my lies will become the truth. And now that the worst moments are over, ought I not to hope that she will allow this month to pass without returning? If she returns, I shall have to renounce the true life which certainly I am not in a fit state to enjoy as yet, but which as time goes on may begin to offer me attractions while my memory of Albertine grows fainter."

I have said that oblivion was beginning to perform its task. But one of the effects of oblivion was precisely —since it meant that many of Albertine's less pleasing aspects, of the boring hours that I had spent with her, no longer figured in my memory, ceased therefore to be reasons for my desiring that she should not be with me as I used to wish when she was still in the house— that it gave me a curtailed impression of her, enhanced by all the love that I had ever felt for other women. In this novel aspect of her, oblivion which nevertheless was engaged upon making me accustomed to our separa-

tion, made me, by shewing me a more attractive Albertine, long all the more for her return.

Since her departure, very often, when I was confident that I shewed no trace of tears, I would ring for Françoise and say to her: "We must make sure that Mademoiselle Albertine hasn't left anything behind her. Don't forget to do her room, it must be ready for her when she comes." Or merely: "Only the other day Mademoiselle Albertine said to me, let me think now, it was the day before she left . . . ." I was anxious to diminish Françoise's abominable pleasure at Albertine's departure by letting her see that it was not to be prolonged. I was anxious also to let Françoise see that I was not afraid to speak of this departure, to proclaim it—like certain generals who describe a forced retreat as a strategic withdrawal in conformity with a prearranged plan—as intended by myself, as constituting an episode the true meaning of which I concealed for the moment, but in no way implying the end of my friendship with Albertine. By repeating her name incessantly I sought in short to introduce, like a breath of air, something of herself into that room in which her departure had left a vacuum, in which I could no longer breathe. Then, moreover, we seek to reduce the dimensions of our grief my making it enter into our everyday speech between ordering a suit of clothes and ordering dinner.

While she was doing Albertine's room, Françoise, out of curiosity, opened the drawer of a little rosewood table in which my mistress used to put away the ornaments which she discarded when she went to bed. "Oh! Monsieur, Mademoiselle Albertine has forgotten to take her

rings, she has left them in the drawer." My first impulse was to say: "We must send them after her." But this would make me appear uncertain of her return. "Very well," I replied after a moment of silence, "it is hardly worth while sending them to her as she is coming back so soon. Give them to me, I shall think about it." Françoise handed me the rings with a distinct misgiving. She loathed Albertine, but, regarding me in her own image, supposed that one could not hand me a letter in the handwriting of my mistress without the risk of my opening it. I took the rings. "Monsieur must take care not to lose them," said Françoise, "such beauties as they are! I don't know who gave them to her, if it was Monsieur or some one else, but I can see that it was some one rich, who had good taste!" "It was not I," I assured her, "besides, they don't both come from the same person, one was given her by her aunt and the other she bought for herself." "Not from the same person!" Françoise exclaimed, "Monsieur must be joking, they are just alike, except that one of them has had a ruby added to it, there's the same eagle on both, the same initials inside . . . ." I do not know whether Françoise was conscious of the pain that she was causing me, but she began at this point to curve her lips in a smile which never left them. "What, the same eagle? You are talking nonsense. It is true that the one without the ruby has an eagle upon it, but on the other it is a sort of man's head." "A man's head, where did Monsieur discover that? I had only to put on my spectacles to see at once that it was one of the eagle's wings; if Monsieur will take his magnifying glass, he will see the other wing on the other side, the head and the beak in the

middle. You can count the feathers. Oh, it's a fine piece of work." My intense anxiety to know whether Albertine had lied to me made me forget that I ought to maintain a certain dignity in Françoise's presence and deny her the wicked pleasure that she felt, if not in torturing me, at least in disparaging my mistress. I remained breathless while Françoise went to fetch my magnifying glass, I took it from her, asked her to shew me the eagle upon the ring with the ruby, she had no difficulty in making me see the wings, conventionalised in the same way as upon the other ring, the feathers, cut separately in relief, the head. She pointed out to me also the similar inscriptions, to which, it is true, others were added upon the ring with the ruby. And on the inside of both was Albertine's monogram. "But I'm surprised that it should need all this to make Monsieur see that the rings are the same," said Françoise. "Even without examining them, you can see that it is the same style, the same way of turning the gold, the same form. As soon as I looked at them I could have sworn that they came from the same place. You can tell it as you can tell the dishes of a good cook." And indeed, to the curiosity of a servant, whetted by hatred and trained to observe details with a startling precision, there had been added, to assist her in this expert criticism, the taste that she had, that same taste in fact which she shewed in her cookery and which was intensified perhaps, as I had noticed when we left Paris for Balbec, in her attire, by the coquetry of a woman who was once good-looking, who has studied the jewels and dresses of other women. I might have taken the wrong box of medicine and, instead of swallowing a few capsules of veronal on a day

when I felt that I had drunk too many cups of tea, might have swallowed as many capsules of cafeine; my heart would not have throbbed more violently. I asked Françoise to leave the room. I would have liked to see Albertine immediately. To my horror at her falsehood, to my jealousy of the unknown donor, was added grief that she should have allowed herself to accept such presents. I made her even more presents, it is true, but a woman whom we are keeping does not seem to us to be a kept women so long as we do not know that she is being kept by other men. And yet since I had continued to spend so much money upon her, I had taken her notwithstanding this moral baseness; this baseness I had maintained in her, I had perhaps increased, perhaps created it. Then, just as we have the faculty of inventing fairy tales to soothe our grief, just as we manage, when we are dying of hunger, to persuade ourself that a stranger is going to leave us a fortune of a hundred millions, I imagined Albertine in my arms, explaining to me in a few words that it was because of the similarity of its workmanship that she had bought the second ring, that it was she who had had her initials engraved on it. But this explanation was still feeble, it had not yet had time to thrust into my mind its beneficent roots, and my grief could not be so quickly soothed. And I reflected that many men who tell their friends that their mistresses are very kind to them must suffer similar torments. Thus it is that they lie to others and to themselves. They do not altogether lie; they do spend in the woman's company hours that are really pleasant; but think of all that the kindness which their mistresses shew them before their friends and which enables them to boast, and of all that the kindness which

their mistresses shew when they are alone with them, and which enables their lovers to bless them, conceal of unrecorded hours in which the lover has suffered, doubted, sought everywhere in vain to discover the truth! It is to such sufferings that we attach the pleasure of loving, of delighting in the most insignificant remarks of a woman, which we know to be insignificant, but which we perfume with her scent. At this moment I could no longer find any delight in inhaling, by an act of memory, the scent of Albertine. Thunderstruck, holding the two rings in my hand, I stared at that pitiless eagle whose beak was rending my heart, whose wings, chiselled in high relief, had borne away the confidence that I retained in my mistress, in whose claws my tortured mind was unable to escape for an instant from the incessantly recurring questions as to the stranger whose name the eagle doubtless symbolised, without however allowing me to decipher it, whom she had doubtless loved in the past, and whom she had doubtless seen again not so long ago, since it was upon that day so pleasant, so intimate, of our drive together through the Bois that I had seen, for the first time, the second ring, that upon which the eagle appeared to be dipping his beak in the bright blood of the ruby.

If, however, morning, noon and night, I never ceased to grieve over Albertine's departure, this did not mean that I was thinking only of her. For one thing, her charm having acquired a gradual ascendancy over things which, in course of time, were entirely detached from her, but were nevertheless electrified by the same emotion that she used to give me, if something made me think of Incarville or of the Verdurins, or of some new part that

Léa was playing, a flood of suffering would overwhelm me. For another thing, what I myself called thinking of Albertine, was thinking of how I might bring her back, of how I might join her, might know what she was doing. With the result that if, during those hours of incessant martyrdom, there had been an illustrator present to represent the images which accompanied my sufferings, you would have seen pictures of the Gare d'Orsay, of the bank notes offered to Mme. Bontemps, of Saint-Loup stooping over the sloping desk of a telegraph office at which he was writing out a telegram for myself, never the picture of Albertine. Just as, throughout the whole course of our life, our egoism sees before it all the time the objects that are of interest to ourself, but never takes in that Ego itself which is incessantly observing them, so the desire which directs our actions descends towards them, but does not reascend to itself, whether because, being unduly utilitarian, it plunges into the action and disdains all knowledge of it, or because we have been looking to the future to compensate for the disappointments of the past, or because the inertia of our mind urges it down the easy slope of imagination, rather than make it reascend the steep slope of introspection. As a matter of fact, in those hours of crisis in which we would stake our whole life, in proportion as the person upon whom it depends reveals more clearly the immensity of the place that she occupies in our life, leaving nothing in the world which is not overthrown by her, so the image of that person diminishes until it is no longer perceptible. In everything we find the effect of her presence in the emotion that we feel; herself, the cause, we do not find anywhere. I was during these days so incapable of forming any picture of

Albertine that I could almost have believed that I was not in love with her, just as my mother, in the moments of desperation in which she was incapable of ever forming any picture of my grandmother (save once in the chance encounter of a dream the importance of which she felt so intensely that she employed all the strength that remained to her in her sleep to make it last), might have accused and did in fact accuse herself of not regretting her mother, whose death had been a mortal blow to her but whose features escaped her memory.

Why should I have supposed that Albertine did not care for women? Because she had said, especially of late, that she did not care for them: but did not our life rest upon a perpetual lie? Never once had she said to me: "Why is it that I cannot go out when and where I choose, why do you always ask other people what I have been doing?" And yet, after all, the conditions of her life were so unusual that she must have asked me this had she not herself guessed the reason. And to my silence as to the causes of her claustration, was it not comprehensible that she should correspond with a similar and constant silence as to her perpetual desires, her innumerable memories and hopes? Françoise looked as though she knew that I was lying when I made an allusion to the imminence of Albertine's return. And her belief seemed to be founded upon something more than that truth which generally guided our old housekeeper, that masters do not like to be humiliated in front of their servants, and allow them to know only so much of the truth as does not depart too far from a flattering fiction, calculated to maintain respect for themselves. This time, Françoise's belief seemed to be founded upon something

else, as though she had herself aroused, kept alive the distrust in Albertine's mind, stimulated her anger, driven her in short to the point at which she could predict her departure as inevitable. If this was true, my version of a temporary absence, of which I had known and approved, could be received with nothing but incredulity by Françoise. But the idea that she had formed of Albertine's venal nature, the exasperation with which, in her hatred, she multiplied the "profit" that Albertine was supposed to be making out of myself, might to some extent give a check to that certainty. And so when in her hearing I made an allusion, as if to something that was altogether natural, to Albertine's immediate return, Françoise would look me in the face, to see whether I was not inventing, in the same way in which, when the butler, to make her angry, read out to her, changing the words, some political news which she hesitated to believe, as for instance the report of the closing of the churches and expulsion of the clergy, even from the other end of the kitchen, and without being able to read it, she would fix her gaze instinctively and greedily upon the paper, as though she had been able to see whether the report was really there.

When Françoise saw that after writing a long letter I put on the envelope the address of Mme. Bontemps, this alarm, hitherto quite vague, that Albertine might return, increased in her. It grew to a regular consternation when one morning she had to bring me with the rest of my mail a letter upon the envelope of which she had recognised Albertine's handwriting. She asked herself whether Albertine's departure had not been a mere make-believe, a supposition which distressed her twice

over as making definitely certain for the future Albertine's presence in the house, and as bringing upon myself, and thereby, in so far as I was Françoise's master, upon herself, the humiliation of having been tricked by Albertine. However great my impatience to read her letter, I could not refrain from studying for a moment Françoise's eyes from which all hope had fled, inducing from this presage the imminence of Albertine's return, as a lover of winter sports concludes with joy that the cold weather is at hand when he sees the swallows fly south. At length Françoise left me, and when I had made sure that she had shut the door behind her, I opened, noiselessly so as not to appear anxious, the letter which ran as follows:

"My dear, thank you for all the nice things that you say to me, I am at your orders to countermand the Rolls, if you think that I can help in any way, as I am sure I can. You have only to let me know the name of your agent. You would let yourself be taken in by these people whose only thought is of selling things, and what would you do with a motor-car, you who never stir out of the house? I am deeply touched that you have kept a happy memory of our last drive together. You may be sure that for my part I shall never forget that drive in a twofold twilight (since night was falling and we were about to part) and that it will be effaced from my memory only when the darkness is complete."

I felt that this final phrase was merely a phrase and that Albertine could not possibly retain until her death any such pleasant memory of this drive from which she had certainly derived no pleasure since she had been impatient to leave me. But I was impressed also, when I thought

of the bicyclist, the golfer of Balbec, who had read nothing but *Esther* before she made my acquaintance, to find how richly endowed she was and how right I had been in thinking that she had in my house enriched herself with fresh qualities which made her different and more complete. And thus, the words that I had said to her at Balbec: "I feel that my friendship would be of value to you, that I am just the person who could give you what you lack"—I had written this upon a photograph which I gave her—"with the certainty that I was being providential"—these words, which I uttered without believing them and simply that she might find some advantage in my society which would outweigh any possible boredom, these words turned out to have been true as well. Similarly, for that matter, when I said to her that I did not wish to see her for fear of falling in love with her, I had said this because on the contrary I knew that in frequent intercourse my love grew cold and that separation kindled it, but in reality our frequent intercourse had given rise to a need of her that was infinitely stronger than my love in the first weeks at Balbec.

Albertine's letter did not help matters in any way. She spoke to me only of writing to my agent. It was necessary to escape from this situation, to cut matters short, and I had the following idea. I sent a letter at once to Andrée in which I told her that Albertine was at her aunt's, that I felt very lonely, that she would be giving me an immense pleasure if she came and stayed with me for a few days and that, as I did not wish to make any mystery, I begged her to inform Albertine of this. And at the same time I wrote to Albertine as though I had not yet received her letter: "My dear, for-

give me for doing something which you will understand so well, I have such a hatred of secrecy that I have chosen that you should be informed by her and by myself. I have acquired, from having you staying so charmingly in the house with me, the bad habit of not being able to live alone. Since we have decided that you are not to come back, it has occurred to me that the person who would best fill your place, because she would make least change in my life, would remind me most strongly of yourself, is Andrée, and I have invited her here. So that all this may not appear too sudden, I have spoken to her only of a short visit, but between ourselves I am pretty certain that this time it will be permanent. Don't you agree that I am right? You know that your little group of girls at Balbec has always been the social unit that has exerted the greatest influence upon me, in which I have been most happy to be eventually included. No doubt it is this influence which still makes itself felt. Since the fatal incompatibility of our natures and the mischances of life have decreed that my little Albertine can never be my wife, I believe that I shall nevertheless find a wife—less charming than herself, but one whom greater conformities of nature will enable perhaps to be happier with me—in Andrée." But after I had sent this letter to the post, the suspicion occurred to me suddenly that, when Albertine wrote to me: "I should have been only too delighted to come back if you had written to me myself," she had said this only because I had not written to her, and that, had I done so, it would not have made any difference; that she would be glad to know that Andrée was staying with me, to think of her as my wife, provided that she herself remained free, because she could

now, as for a week past, stultifying the hourly precautions which I had adopted during more than six months in Paris, abandon herself to her vices and do what, minute by minute, I had prevented her from doing. I told myself that probably she was making an improper use, down there, of her freedom, and no doubt this idea which I formed seemed to me sad but remained general, shewing me no special details, and, by the indefinite number of possible mistresses which it allowed me to imagine, prevented me from stopping to consider any one of them, drew my mind on in a sort of perpetual motion not free from pain but tinged with a pain which the absence of any concrete image rendered endurable. It ceased however to be endurable and became atrocious when Saint-Loup arrived. Before I explain why the information that he gave me made me so unhappy, I ought to relate an incident which I place immediately before his visit and the memory of which so distressed me afterwards that it weakened, if not the painful impression that was made on me by my conversation with Saint-Loup, at any rate the practical effect of this conversation. This incident was as follows. Burning with impatience to see Saint-Loup, I was waiting for him upon the staircase (a thing which I could not have done had my mother been at home, for it was what she most abominated, next to "talking from the window") when I heard the following speech: "Do you mean to say you don't know how to get a fellow sacked whom you don't like? It's not difficult. You need only hide the things that he has to take in. Then, when they're in a hurry and ring for him, he can't find anything, he loses his head. My aunt will be furious with him, and will say to you: 'Why, what is the man

doing?' When he does shew his face, everybody will be raging, and he won't have what is wanted. After this has happened four or five times, you may be sure that they'll sack him, especially if you take care to dirty the things that he has to bring in clean, and all that sort of thing." I remained speechless with astonishment, for these cruel, machiavellian words were uttered by the voice of Saint-Loup. Now I had always regarded him as so good, so tender-hearted a person that this speech had the same effect upon me as if he had been acting the part of Satan in a play: it could not be in his own name that he was speaking. "But after all a man has got to earn his living," said the other person, of whom I then caught sight and who was one of the Duchesse de Guermantes's footmen. "What the hell does that matter to you so long as you're all right?" Saint-Loup replied callously. "It will be all the more fun for you, having a scape-goat. You can easily spill ink over his livery just when he has to go and wait at a big dinner-party, and never leave him in peace for a moment until he's only too glad to give notice. Anyhow, I can put a spoke in his wheel, I shall tell my aunt that I admire your patience in working with a great lout like that, and so dirty too." I shewed myself, Saint-Loup came to greet me, but my confidence in him was shaken since I had heard him speak in a manner so different from anything that I knew. And I asked myself whether a person who was capable of acting so cruelly towards a poor and defenceless man had not played the part of a traitor towards myself, on his mission to Mme. Bontemps. This reflexion was of most service in helping me not to regard his failure as a proof that I myself might not succeed, after he had left

me. But so long as he was with me, it was nevertheless of the Saint-Loup of long ago and especially of the friend who had just come from Mme. Bontemps that I thought. He began by saying: "You feel that I ought to have telephoned to you more often, but I was always told that you were engaged." But the point at which my pain became unendurable was when he said: "To begin where my last telegram left you, after passing by a sort of shed, I entered the house and at the end of a long passage was shewn into a drawing-room." At these words, shed, passage, drawing-room, and before he had even finished uttering them, my heart was shattered more swiftly than by an electric current, for the force which girdles the earth many times in a second is not electricity, but pain. How I repeated them to myself, renewing the shock as I chose, these words, shed, passage, drawing-room, after Saint-Loup had left me! In a shed one girl can lie down with another. And in that drawing-room who could tell what Albertine used to do when her aunt was not there? What was this? Had I then imagined the house in which she was living as incapable of possessing either a shed or a drawing-room? No, I had not imagined it at all, except as a vague place. I had suffered originally at the geographical identification of the place in which Albertine was. When I had learned that, instead of being in two or three possible places, she was in Touraine, those words uttered by her porter had marked in my heart as upon a map the place in which I must at length suffer. But once I had grown accustomed to the idea that she was in a house in Touraine, I had not seen the house. Never had there occurred to my imagination this appalling idea of a drawing-room, a shed, a passage,

which seemed to be facing me in the retina of Saint-Loup's eyes, who had seen them, these rooms in which Albertine came and went, was living her life, these rooms in particular and not an infinity of possible rooms which had cancelled one another. With the words shed, passage, drawing-room, I became aware of my folly in having left Albertine for a week in this cursed place, the existence (instead of the mere possibility) of which had just been revealed to me. Alas! when Saint-Loup told me also that in this drawing-room he had heard some one singing at the top of her voice in an adjoining room and that it was Albertine who was singing, I realised with despair that, rid of me at last, she was happy! She had regained her freedom. And I who had been thinking that she would come to take the place of Andrée! My grief turned to anger with Saint-Loup. "That is the one thing in the world that I asked you to avoid, that she should know of your coming." "If you imagine it was easy! They had assured me that she was not in the house. Oh, I know very well that you aren't pleased with me, I could tell that from your telegrams. But you are not being fair to me, I did all that I could." Set free once more, having left the cage from which, here at home, I used to remain for days on end without making her come to my room, Albertine had regained all her value in my eyes, she had become once more the person whom everyone pursued, the marvellous bird of the earliest days." "However, let us get back to business. As for the question of the money, I don't know what to say to you, I found myself addressing a woman who seemed to me to be so scrupulous that I was afraid of shocking her. However, she didn't say no when I men-

tioned the money to her. In fact, a little later she told me that she was touched to find that we understood one another so well. And yet everything that she said after that was so delicate, so refined, that it seemed to me impossible that she could have been referring to my offer of money when she said: 'We understand one another so well,' for after all I was behaving like a cad." "But perhaps she did not realise what you meant, she cannot have heard you, you ought to have repeated the offer, for then you would certainly have won the battle." "But what do you mean by saying that she cannot have heard me, I spoke to her as I am speaking to you, she is neither deaf nor mad." "And she made no comment?" "None." "You ought to have repeated the offer." "How do you mean, repeat it? As soon as we met I saw what sort of person she was, I said to myself that you had made a mistake, that you were letting me in for the most awful blunder, and that it would be terribly difficult to offer her the money like that. I did it, however, to oblige you, feeling certain that she would turn me out of the house." "But she did not. Therefore, either she had not heard you and you should have started afresh, or you could have developed the topic." "You say: 'She had not heard,' because you were here in Paris, but, I repeat, if you had been present at our conversation, there was not a sound to interrupt us, I said it quite bluntly, it is not possible that she failed to understand." "But anyhow is she quite convinced that I have always wished to marry her niece?" "No, as to that, if you want my opinion, she did not believe that you had any intention of marrying the girl. She told me that you yourself had informed her niece that you wished

to leave her. I don't really know whether now she is convinced that you wish to marry." This reassured me slightly by shewing me that I was less humiliated, and therefore more capable of being still loved, more free to take some decisive action. Nevertheless I was in torments. "I am sorry, because I can see that you are not pleased." "Yes, I am touched by your kindness, I am grateful to you, but it seems to me that you might . . . ." "I did my best. No one else could have done more or even as much. Try sending some one else." "No, as a matter of fact, if I had known, I should not have sent you, but the failure of your attempt prevents me from making another." I heaped reproaches upon him: he had tried to do me a service and had not succeeded. Saint-Loup as he left the house had met some girls coming in. I had already and often supposed that Albertine knew other girls in the country; but this was the first time that I felt the torture of that supposition. We are really led to believe that nature has allowed our mind to secrete a natural antidote which destroys the suppositions that we form, at once without intermission and without danger. But there was nothing to render me immune from these girls whom Saint-Loup had met. All these details, were they not precisely what I had sought to learn from everyone with regard to Albertine, was it not I who, in order to learn them more fully, had begged Saint-Loup, summoned back to Paris by his colonel, to come and see me at all costs, was it not therefore I who had desired them, or rather my famished grief, longing to feed and to wax fat upon them? Finally Saint-Loup told me that he had had the pleasant surprise of meeting, quite near the house, the only familiar face

that had reminded him of the past, a former friend of Rachel, a pretty actress who was taking a holiday in the neighbourhood. And the name of this actress was enough to make me say to myself: "Perhaps it is with her;" was enough to make me behold, in the arms even of a woman whom I did not know, Albertine smiling and flushed with pleasure. And after all why should not this have been true? had I found fault with myself for thinking of other women since I had known Albertine? On the evening of my first visit to the Princesse de Guermantes, when I returned home, had I not been thinking far less of her than of the girl of whom Saint-Loup had told me who frequented disorderly houses and of Mme. Putbus's maid? Was it not in the hope of meeting the latter of these that I had returned to Balbec, and, more recently, had been planning to go to Venice? Why should not Albertine have been planning to go to Touraine? Only, when it came to the point, as I now realised, I would not have left her, I would not have gone to Venice. Even in my own heart of hearts, when I said to myself: "I shall leave her presently," I knew that I would never leave her, just as I knew that I would never settle down again to work, or make myself live upon hygienic principles, or do any of the things which, day by day, I vowed that I would do upon the morrow. Only, whatever I might feel in my heart, I had thought it more adroit to let her live under the perpetual menace of a separation. And no doubt, thanks to my detestable adroitness, I had convinced her only too well. In any case, now, things could not go on like this. I could not leave her in Touraine with those girls, with that actress, I could not endure the thought of that life which was

escaping my control. I would await her reply to my letter: if she was doing wrong, alas!, a day more or less made no difference (and perhaps I said this to myself because, being no longer in the habit of taking note of every minute of her life, whereas a single minute in which she was unobserved would formerly have driven me out of my mind, my jealousy no longer observed the same division of time). But as soon as I should have received her answer, if she was not coming back, I would go to fetch her; willy-nilly, I would tear her away from her women friends. Besides, was it not better for me to go down in person, now that I had discovered the duplicity, hitherto unsuspected by me, of Saint-Loup; he might, for all I knew, have organised a plot to separate me from Albertine.

And at the same time, how I should have been lying now had I written to her, as I used to say to her in Paris, that I hoped that no accident might befall her. Ah! if some accident had occurred, my life, instead of being poisoned for ever by this incessant jealousy, would at once regain, if not happiness, at least a state of calm through the suppression of suffering.

The suppression of suffering? Can I really have believed it, have believed that death merely eliminates what exists, and leaves everything else in its place, that it removes the grief from the heart of him for whom the other person's existence has ceased to be anything but a source of grief, that it removes the grief and substitutes nothing in its place. The suppression of grief! As I glanced at the paragraphs in the newspapers, I regretted that I had not had the courage to form the same wish as Swann. If Albertine could have been the victim of

an accident, were she alive I should have had a pretext for hastening to her bedside, were she dead I should have recovered, as Swann said, my freedom to live as I chose. Did I believe this? He had believed it, that subtlest of men who thought that he knew himself well. How little do we know what we have in our heart. How clearly, a little later, had he been still alive, I could have proved to him that his wish was not only criminal but absurd, that the death of her whom he loved would have set him free from nothing.

I forsook all pride with regard to Albertine, I sent her a despairing telegram begging her to return upon any conditions, telling her that she might do anything she liked, that I asked only to be allowed to take her in my arms for a minute three times a week, before she went to bed. And had she confined me to once a week, I would have accepted the restriction. She did not, ever, return. My telegram had just gone to her when I myself received one. It was from Mme. Bontemps. The world is not created once and for all time for each of us individually. There are added to it in the course of our life things of which we have never had any suspicion. Alas! it was not a suppression of suffering that was wrought in me by the first two lines of the telegram: "My poor friend, our little Albertine is no more; forgive me for breaking this terrible news to you who were so fond of her. She was thrown by her horse against a tree while she was out riding. All our efforts to restore her to life were unavailing. If only I were dead in her place!" No, not the suppression of suffering, but a suffering until then unimagined, that of learning that she would not come back. And yet, had I not told myself,

many times, that, quite possibly, she would not come back? I had indeed told myself so, but now I saw that never for a moment had I believed it. As I needed her presence, her kisses, to enable me to endure the pain that my suspicions wrought in me, I had formed, since our Balbec days, the habit of being always with her. Even when she had gone out, when I was left alone, I was kissing her still. I had continued to do so since her departure for Touraine. I had less need of her fidelity than of her return. And if my reason might with impunity cast a doubt upon her now and again, my imagination never ceased for an instant to bring her before me. Instinctively I passed my hand over my throat, over my lips which felt themselves kissed by her lips still after she had gone away, and would never be kissed by them again; I passed my hands over them, as Mamma had caressed me at the time of my grandmother's death, when she said: "My poor boy, your grandmother, who was so fond of you, will never kiss you again." All my life to come seemed to have been wrenched from my heart. My life to come? I had not then thought at times of living it without Albertine? Why, no! All this time had I, then, been vowing to her service every minute of my life until my death? Why, of course! This future indissolubly blended with hers I had never had the vision to perceive, but now that it had just been shattered, I could feel the place that it occupied in my gaping heart. Françoise, who still knew nothing, came into my room; in a sudden fury I shouted at her: "What do you want?" Then (there are sometimes words which set a different reality in the same place as that which confronts us; they stun us as does a sudden fit of giddiness) she said to me:

"Monsieur has no need to look cross. I've got something here that will make him very happy. Here are two letters from Mademoiselle Albertine." I felt, afterwards, that I must have stared at her with the eyes of a man whose mind has become unbalanced. I was not even glad, nor was I incredulous. I was like a person who sees the same place in his room occupied by a sofa and by a grotto: nothing seeming to him more real, he collapses on the floor. Albertine's two letters must have been written at an interval of a few hours, possibly at the same moment, and, anyhow, only a short while before the fatal ride. The first said: "My dear, I must thank you for the proof of your confidence which you give me when you tell me of your plan to get Andrée to stay with you. I am sure that she will be delighted to accept, and I think that it will be a very good thing for her. With her talents, she will know how to make the most of the companionship of a man like yourself, and of the admirable influence which you manage to secure over other people. I feel that you have had an idea from which as much good may spring for her as for yourself. And so, if she should make the least shadow of difficulty (which I don't suppose), telegraph to me, I undertake to bring pressure to bear upon her." The second was dated on the following day. (As a matter of fact, she must have written her two letters at an interval of a few minutes, possibly without any interval, and must have antedated the first. For, all the time, I had been forming an absurd idea of her intentions, which had been only this: to return to me, and which anyone with no direct interest in the matter, a man lacking in imagination, the plenipotentiary in a peace treaty, the merchant who has to examine a deal, would

have judged more accurately than myself.) It contained only these words: "Is it too late for me to return to you? If you have not yet written to Andrée, would you be prepared to take me back? I shall abide by your decision, but I beg you not to be long in letting me know it, you can imagine how impatiently I shall be waiting. If it is telling me to return, I shall take the train at once. With my whole heart, yours, Albertine."

For the death of Albertine to be able to suppress my suffering, the shock of the fall would have had to kill her not only in Touraine but in myself. There, never had she been more alive. In order to enter into us, another person must first have assumed the form, have entered into the surroundings of the moment; appearing to us only in a succession of momentary flashes, he has never been able to furnish us with more than one aspect of himself at a time, to present us with more than a single photograph of himself. A great weakness, no doubt, for a person to consist merely in a collection of moments; a great strength also: it is dependent upon memory, and our memory of a moment is not informed of everything that has happened since; this moment which it has registered endures still, lives still, and with it the person whose form is outlined in it. And moreover, this disintegration does not only make the dead man live, it multiplies him. To find consolation, it was not one, it was innumerable Albertines that I must first forget. When I had reached the stage of enduring the grief of losing this Albertine, I must begin afresh with another, with a hundred others.

So, then, my life was entirely altered. What had made it—and not owing to Albertine, concurrently with her, when I was alone—attractive, was precisely the perpetual

resurgence, at the bidding of identical moments, of moments from the past. From the sound of the rain I recaptured the scent of the lilacs at Combray, from the shifting of the sun's rays on the balcony the pigeons in the Champs-Elysées, from the muffling of all noise in the heat of the morning hours, the cool taste of cherries, the longing for Brittany or Venice from the sound of the wind and the return of Easter. Summer was at hand, the days were long, the weather warm. It was the season when, early in the morning, pupils and teachers resort to the public gardens to prepare for the final examinations under the trees, seeking to extract the sole drop of coolness that is let fall by a sky less ardent than in the midday heat but already as sterilely pure. From my darkened room, with a power of evocation equal to that of former days but capable now of evoking only pain, I felt that outside, in the heaviness of the atmosphere, the setting sun was plastering the vertical fronts of houses and churches with a tawny distemper. And if Françoise, when she came in, parted, by accident, the inner curtains, I stifled a cry of pain at the gash that was cut in my heart by that ray of long-ago sunlight which had made beautiful in my eyes the modern front of Marcouville l'Orgueilleuse, when Albertine said to me: "It is restored." Not knowing how to account to Françoise for my groan, I said to her: "Oh, I am so thirsty." She left the room, returned, but I turned sharply away, smarting under the painful discharge of one of the thousand invisible memories which at every moment burst into view in the surrounding darkness: I had noticed that she had brought in a jug of cider and a dish of cherries, things which a farm-lad had brought out to us in the carriage, at Balbec, "kinds" in

which I should have made the most perfect communion, in those days, with the prismatic gleam in shuttered dining-rooms on days of scorching heat. Then I thought for the first time of the farm called Les Ecorres, and said to myself that on certain days when Albertine had told me, at Balbec, that she would not be free, that she was obliged to go somewhere with her aunt, she had perhaps been with one or another of her girl friends at some farm to which she knew that I was not in the habit of going, and, while I waited desperately for her at Marie-Antoinette, where they told me: "No, we have not seen her to-day," had been using, to her friend, the same words that she used to say to myself when we went out together: "He will never think of looking for us here, so that there's no fear of our being disturbed." I told Françoise to draw the curtains together, so that I should not see that ray of sunlight. But it continued to filter through, just as corrosive, into my memory. "It doesn't appeal to me, it has been restored, but we shall go to-morrow to Saint-Mars le Vêtu, and the day after to . . ." To-morrow, the day after, it was a prospect of life shared in common, perhaps for all time, that was opening; my heart leaped towards it, but it was no longer there, Albertine was dead.

I asked Françoise the time. Six o'clock. At last, thank God, that oppressive heat would be lifted of which in the past I used to complain to Albertine, and which we so enjoyed. The day was drawing to its close. But what did that profit me? The cool evening air came in; it was the sun setting in my memory, at the end of a road which we had taken, she and I, on our way home, that I saw now, more remote than the farthest village,

like some distant town not to be reached that evening, which we would spend at Balbec, still together. Together then; now I must stop short on the brink of that same abyss; she was dead. It was not enough now to draw the curtains, I tried to stop the eyes and ears of my memory so as not to see that band of orange in the western sky, so as not to hear those invisible birds responding from one tree to the next on either side of me who was then so tenderly embraced by her that now was dead. I tried to avoid those sensations that are given us by the dampness of leaves in the evening air, the steep rise and fall of mule-tracks. But already those sensations had gripped me afresh, carried far enough back from the present moment so that it should have gathered all the recoil, all the resilience necessary to strike me afresh, this idea that Albertine was dead. Ah! never again would I enter a forest, I would stroll no more beneath the spreading trees. But would the broad plains be less cruel to me? How many times had I crossed, going in search of Albertine, how many times had I entered, on my return with her, the great plain of Cricqueville, now in foggy weather when the flooding mist gave us the illusion of being surrounded by a vast lake, now on limpid evenings when the moonlight, dematerialising the earth, making it appear, a yard away, celestial, as it is, in the daytime, on far horizons only, enshrined the fields, the woods, with the firmament to which it had assimilated them, in the moss-agate of a universal blue.

Françoise was bound to rejoice at Albertine's death, and it should, in justice to her, be said that by a sort of tactful convention she made no pretence of sorrow. But the unwritten laws of her immemorial code and the tradition

of the mediaeval peasant woman who weeps as in the romances of chivalry were older than her hatred of Albertine and even of Eulalie. And so, on one of these late afternoons, as I was not quick enough in concealing my distress, she caught sight of my tears, served by the instinct of a little old peasant woman which at one time had led her to catch and torture animals, to feel only amusement in wringing the necks of chickens and in boiling lobsters alive, and, when I was ill, in observing, as it might be the wounds that she had inflicted upon an owl, my suffering expression which she afterwards proclaimed in a sepulchral tone and as a presage of coming disaster. But her Combray "Customary" did not permit her to treat lightly tears, grief, things which in her judgment were as fatal as shedding one's flannels in spring or eating when one had no "stomach." "Oh, no, Monsieur, it doesn't do to cry like that, it isn't good for you." And in her attempt to stem my tears she shewed as much uneasiness as though they had been torrents of blood. Unfortunately I adopted a chilly air that cut short the effusions in which she was hoping to indulge and which might quite well, for that matter, have been sincere. Her attitude towards Albertine had been, perhaps, akin to her attitude towards Eulalie, and, now that my mistress could no longer derive any profit from me, Françoise had ceased to hate her. She felt bound, however, to let me see that she was perfectly well aware that I was crying, and that, following the deplorable example set by my family, I did not wish to "let it be seen." "You mustn't cry, Monsieur," she adjured me, in a calmer tone, this time, and intending to prove her own perspicacity rather than to shew me any compassion. And she went on: "It was

bound to happen; she was too happy, poor creature, she never knew how happy she was."

How slow the day is in dying on these interminable summer evenings. A pallid ghost of the house opposite continued indefinitely to sketch upon the sky its persistent whiteness. At last it was dark indoors; I stumbled against the furniture in the hall, but in the door that opened upon the staircase, in the midst of the darkness which I had supposed to be complete, the glazed panel was translucent and blue, with the blue of a flower, the blue of an insect's wing, a blue that would have seemed to me beautiful if I had not felt it to be a last reflexion, trenchant as a blade of steel, a supreme blow which in its indefatigable cruelty the day was still dealing me. In the end, however, the darkness became complete, but then a glimpse of a star behind one of the trees in the courtyard was enough to remind me of how we used to set out in a carriage, after dinner, for the woods of Chantepie, carpeted with moonlight. And even in the streets it would so happen that I could isolate upon the back of a seat, could gather there the natural purity of a moonbeam in the midst of the artificial lights of Paris, of that Paris over which it enthroned, by making the town return for a moment, in my imagination, to a state of nature, with the infinite silence of the suggested fields, the heart-rending memory of the walks that I had taken in them with Albertine. Ah! when would the night end? But at the first cool breath of dawn I shuddered, for it had revived in me the delight of that summer when, from Balbec to Incarville, from Incarville to Balbec, we had so many times escorted each other home until the break of day. I had now only one hope left for the future—a

hope far more heartrending than any dread—which was that I might forget Albertine. I knew that I should one day forget her; I had quite forgotten Gilberte, Mme. de Guermantes; I had quite forgotten my grandmother. And it is our most fitting and most cruel punishment, for that so complete oblivion, as tranquil as the oblivion of the graveyard, by which we have detached ourself from those whom we no longer love, that we can see this same oblivion to be inevitable in the case of those whom we love still. To tell the truth, we know it to be a state not painful, a state of indifference. But not being able to think at the same time of what I was and of what I should one day be, I thought with despair of all that covering mantle of caresses, of kisses, of friendly slumber, of which I must presently let myself be divested for all time. The rush of these tender memories sweeping on to break against the knowledge that Albertine was dead oppressed me by the incessant conflict of their baffled waves so that I could not keep still; I rose, but all of a sudden I stopped in consternation; the same faint daybreak that I used to see at the moment when I had just left Albertine, still radiant and warm with her kisses, had come into the room and bared, above the curtains, its blade now a sinister portent, whose whiteness, cold, implacable and compact, entered the room like a dagger thrust into my heart.

Presently the sounds from the streets would begin, enabling me to tell from the qualitative scale of their resonance the degree of the steadily increasing heat in which they were sounding. But in this heat which, a few hours later, would have saturated itself in the fragrance of cherries, what I found (as in a medicine which the substitution

of one ingredient for another is sufficient to transform from the stimulant and tonic that it was into a debilitating drug) was no longer the desire for women but the anguish of Albertine's departure. Besides, the memory of all my desires was as much impregnated with her, and with suffering, as the memory of my pleasures. That Venice where I had thought that her company would be a nuisance (doubtless because I had felt in a confused way that it would be necessary to me), now that Albertine was no more, I preferred not to go there. Albertine had seemed to me to be an obstacle interposed between me and everything else, because she was for me what contained everything, and it was from her as from an urn that I might receive things. Now that this urn was shattered, I no longer felt that I had the courage to grasp things; there was nothing now from which I did not turn away, spiritless, preferring not to taste it. So that my separation from her did not in the least throw open to me the field of possible pleasures which I had imagined to be closed to me by her presence. Besides, the obstacle which her presence had perhaps indeed been in the way of my travelling, of my enjoying life, had only (as always happens) been a mask for other obstacles which reappeared intact now that this first obstacle had been removed. It had been in the same way that, in the past, when some friend had called to see me and had prevented me from working, if on the following day I was left undisturbed, I did not work any better. Let an illness, a duel, a runaway horse make us see death face to face, how richly we should have enjoyed the life of pleasure, the travels in unknown lands which are about to be snatched from us. And no sooner is the danger past than

what we find once again before us is the same dull life in which none of those delights had any existence for us.

No doubt these nights that are so short continue for but a brief season. Winter would at length return, when I should no longer have to dread the memory of drives with her, protracted until the too early dawn. But would not the first frosts bring back to me, preserved in their cold storage, the germ of my first desires, when at midnight I used to send for her, when the time seemed so long until I heard her ring the bell: a sound for which I might now wait everlastingly in vain? Would they not bring back to me the germ of my first uneasiness, when, upon two occasions, I thought that she was not coming? At that time I saw her but rarely, but even those intervals that there were between her visits which made her emerge, after many weeks, from the heart of an unknown life which I made no effort to possess, ensured my peace of mind by preventing the first inklings, constantly interrupted, of my jealousy from coagulating, from forming a solid mass in my heart. So far as they had contrived to be soothing, at that earlier time, so far, in retrospect, were they stamped with the mark of suffering, since all the unaccountable things that she might, while those intervals lasted, have been doing had ceased to be immaterial to me, and especially now that no visit from her would ever fall to my lot again; so that those January evenings on which she used to come, and which, for that reason, had been so dear to me, would blow into me now with their biting winds an uneasiness which then I did not know, and would bring back to me (but now grown pernicious) the first germ of my love. And when I considered that I would see again presently that cold

season, which since the time of Gilberte and my play-hours in the Champs Elysées, had always seemed to me so depressing; when I thought that there would be returning again evenings like that evening of snow when I had vainly, far into the night, waited for Albertine to come; then as a consumptive chooses the best place, from the physical point of view, for his lungs, but in my case making a moral choice, what at such moments I still dreaded most for my grief, for my heart, was the return of the intense cold, and I said to myself that what it would be hardest to live through was perhaps the winter. Bound up as it was with each of the seasons, in order for me to discard the memory of Albertine I should have had first to forget them all, prepared to begin again to learn to know them, as an old man after a stroke of paralysis learns again to read; I should have had first to forego the entire universe. Nothing, I told myself, but an actual extinction of myself would be capable (but that was impossible) of consoling me for hers. I did not realise that the death of oneself is neither impossible nor extraordinary; it is effected without our knowledge, it may be against our will, every day of our life, and I should have to suffer from the recurrence of all sorts of days which not only nature but adventitious circumstances, a purely conventional order introduce into a season. Presently would return the day on which I had gone to Balbec in that earlier summer when my love, which was not yet inseparable from jealousy and did not perplex itself with the problem of what Albertine would be doing all day, had still to pass through so many evolutions before becoming that so specialized love of the latest period, that this final year, in which Albertine's

destiny had begun to change and had received its quietus, appeared to me full, multiform, vast, like a whole century. Then it would be the memory of days more slow in reviving but dating from still earlier years; on the rainy Sundays on which nevertheless everyone else had gone out, in the void of the afternoon, when the sound of wind and rain would in the past have bidden me stay at home, to "philosophise in my garret," with what anxiety would I see the hour approach at which Albertine, so little expected, had come to visit me, had fondled me for the first time, breaking off because Françoise had brought in the lamp, in that time now doubly dead when it had been Albertine who was interested in me, when my affection for her might legitimately nourish so strong a hope. Even later in the season, those glorious evenings when the windows of kitchens, of girls' schools, standing open to the view like wayside shrines, allow the street to crown itself with a diadem of those demi-goddesses who, conversing, ever so close to us, with their peers, fill us with a feverish longing to penetrate into their mythological existence, recalled to me nothing now but the affection of Albertine whose company was an obstacle in the way of my approaching them.

Moreover, to the memory even of hours that were purely natural would inevitably be added the moral background that makes each of them a thing apart. When, later on, I should hear the goatherd's horn, on a first fine, almost Italian morning, the day that followed would blend successively with its sunshine the anxiety of knowing that Albertine was at the Trocadéro, possibly with Léa and the two girls, then her kindly, domestic gentleness, almost that of a wife who seemed to me then an

embarrassment and whom Françoise was bringing home to me. That telephone message from Françoise which had conveyed to me the dutiful homage of an Albertine who was returning with her, I had thought at the time that it made me swell with pride. I was mistaken. If it had exhilarated me, that was because it had made me feel that she whom I loved was really mine, lived only for me, and even at a distance, without my needing to occupy my mind with her, regarded me as her lord and master, returning home upon a sign from myself. And so that telephone message had been a particle of sweetness, coming to me from afar, sent out from that region of the Trocadéro where there were proved to be for me sources of happiness directing towards me molecules of comfort, healing balms, restoring to me at length so precious a liberty of spirit that I need do no more, surrendering myself without the restriction of a single care to Wagner's music, than await the certain arrival of Albertine, without fever, with an entire absence of impatience in which I had not had the perspicacity to recognise true happiness. And this happiness that she should return, that she should obey me and be mine, the cause of it lay in love and not in pride. It would have been quite immaterial to me now to have at my behest fifty women returning, at a sign from myself, not from the Trocadéro but from the Indies. But that day, conscious of Albertine who, while I sat alone in my room playing music, was coming dutifully to join me, I had breathed in, where it lay scattered like motes in a sunbeam, one of those substances which, just as others are salutary to the body, do good to the soul. Then there had been, half an hour later, Albertine's return, then the drive with

Albertine returned, a drive which I had thought tedious because it was accompanied for me by certainty, but which, on account of that very certainty, had, from the moment of Françoise's telephoning to me that she was bringing Albertine home, let flow a golden calm over the hours that followed, had made of them as it were a second day, wholly unlike the first, because it had a completely different moral basis, a moral basis which made it an original day, which came and added itself to the variety of the days that I had previously known, a day which I should never have been able to imagine—any more than we could imagine the delicious idleness of a day in summer if such days did not exist in the calendar of those through which we had lived—a day of which I could not say absolutely that I recalled it, for to this calm I added now an anguish which I had not felt at the time. But at a much later date, when I went over gradually, in a reversed order, the times through which I had passed before I was so much in love with Albertine, when my scarred heart could detach itself without suffering from Albertine dead, then I was able to recall at length without suffering that day on which Albertine had gone shopping with Françoise instead of remaining at the Trocadéro; I recalled it with pleasure, as belonging to a moral season which I had not known until then; I recalled it at length exactly, without adding to it now any suffering, rather, on the contrary, as we recall certain days in summer which we found too hot while they lasted, and from which only after they have passed do we extract their unalloyed standard of fine gold and imperishable azure.

With the result that these several years imposed upon my memory of Albertine, which made them so painful,

the successive colouring, the different modulations not only of their seasons or of their hours, from late afternoons in June to winter evenings, from seas by moonlight to dawn that broke as I was on my way home, from snow in Paris to fallen leaves at Saint-Cloud, but also of each of the particular ideas of Albertine that I successively formed, of the physical aspect in which I pictured her at each of those moments, the degree of frequency with which I had seen her during that season, which itself appeared consequently more or less dispersed or compact, the anxieties which she might have caused me by keeping me waiting, the desire which I had felt at a given moment for her, the hopes formed and then blasted; all of these modified the character of my retrospective sorrow fully as much as the impressions of light or of scents which were associated with it, and completed each of the solar years through which I had lived—years which, simply with their springs, their trees, their breezes, were already so sad because of the indissociable memory of her—complementing each of them with a sort of sentimental year in which the hours were defined not by the sun's position, but by the strain of waiting for a tryst, in which the length of the days, in which the changes of temperature were determined not by the seasons but by the soaring flight of my hopes, the progress of our intimacy, the gradual transformation of her face, the expeditions on which she had gone, the frequency and style of the letters that she had written me during her absence, her more or less eager anxiety to see me on her return. And lastly if these changes of season, if these different days furnished me each with a fresh Albertine, it was not only by recalling to me similar moments. The reader

will remember that always, even before I began to be in love, each day had made me a different person, swayed by other desires because he had other perceptions, a person who, whereas he had dreamed only of cliffs and tempests overnight, if the indiscreet spring dawn had distilled a scent of roses through the gaping portals of his house of sleep, would awake alert to set off for Italy. Even in my love, had not the changing state of my moral atmosphere, the varying pressure of my beliefs, had they not one day diminished the visibility of the love that I was feeling, had they not another day extended it beyond all bounds, one day softened it to a smile, another day condensed it to a storm? We exist only by virtue of what we possess, we possess only what is really present to us, and so many of our memories, our humours, our ideas set out to voyage far away from us, until they are lost to sight! Then we can no longer make them enter into our reckoning of the total which is our personality. But they know of secret paths by which to return to us. And on certain nights, having gone to sleep almost without regretting Albertine any more—we can regret only what we remember—on awakening I found a whole fleet of memories which had come to cruise upon the surface of my clearest consciousness, and seemed marvellously distinct. Then I wept over what I could see so plainly, what overnight had been to me non-existent. In an instant, Albertine's name, her death, had changed their meaning; her betrayals had suddenly resumed their old importance.

How could she have seemed dead to me when now, in order to think of her, I had at my disposal only those same images one or other of which I used to recall when

she was alive, each one being associated with a particular moment? Rapid and bowed above the mystic wheel of her bicycle, tightly strapped upon rainy days in the amazonian corslet of her waterproof which made her breasts protrude, while serpents writhed in her turbaned hair, she scattered terror in the streets of Balbec; on the evenings on which we had taken champagne with us to the woods of Chantepie, her voice provoking, altered, she shewed on her face that pallid warmth colouring only over her cheekbones so that, barely able to make her out in the darkness of the carriage, I drew her face into the moonlight in order to see her better, and which I tried now in vain to recapture, to see again in a darkness that would never end. A little statuette as we drove to the island, a large, calm coarsely grained face above the pianola, she was thus by turns rain-soaked and swift, provoking and diaphanous, motionless and smiling, an angel of music. So that what would have to be obliterated in me was not one only, but countless Albertines. Each of these was thus attached to a moment, to the date of which I found myself carried back when I saw again that particular Albertine. And the moments of the past do not remain still; they retain in our memory the motion which drew them towards the future, towards a future which has itself become the past, and draw us on in their train. Never had I caressed the waterproofed Albertine of the rainy days, I wanted to ask her to divest herself of that armour, that would be to know with her the love of the tented field, the brotherhood of travel. But this was no longer possible, she was dead. Never either, for fear of corrupting her, had I shewn any sign of comprehension on the evenings when she seemed to be

offering me pleasures which, but for my self-restraint, she would not perhaps have sought from others, and which aroused in me now a frantic desire. I should not have found them the same in any other woman, but she who would fain have offered me them I might scour the whole world now without encountering, for Albertine was dead. It seemed that I had to choose between two sets of facts, to decide which was the truth, so far was the fact of Albertine's death—arising for me from a reality which I had not known; her life in Touraine—a contradiction of all my thoughts of her, my desires, my regrets, my tenderness, my rage, my jealousy. So great a wealth of memories, borrowed from the treasury of her life, such a profusion of sentiments evoking, implicating her life, seemed to make it incredible that Albertine should be dead. Such a profusion of sentiments, for my memory, while preserving my affection, left to it all its variety. It was not Albertine alone that was simply a series of moments, it was also myself. My love for her had not been simple: to a curious interest in the unknown had been added a sensual desire and to a sentiment of an almost conjugal mildness, at one moment indifference, at another a jealous fury. I was not one man only, but the steady advance hour after hour of an army in close formation, in which there appeared, according to the moment, impassioned men, indifferent men, jealous men—jealous men no two of whom were jealous of the same woman. And no doubt it would be from this that one day would come the healing which I should not expect. In a composite mass, these elements may, one by one, without our noticing it, be replaced by others, which others again eliminate or reinforce, until in the end a change has been

brought about which it would be impossible to conceive if we were a single person. The complexity of my love, of my person, multiplied, diversified my sufferings. And yet they could always be ranged in the two categories, the option between which had made up the whole life of my love for Albertine, swayed alternately by trust and by a jealous suspicion.

If I had found it difficult to imagine that Albertine, so vitally alive in me (wearing as I did the double harness of the present and the past), was dead, perhaps it was equally paradoxical in me that Albertine, whom I knew to be dead, could still excite my jealousy, and that this suspicion of the misdeeds of which Albertine, stripped now of the flesh that had rejoiced in them, of the heart that had been able to desire them, was no longer capable, nor responsible for them, should excite in me so keen a suffering that I should only have blessed them could I have seen in those misdeeds the pledge of the moral reality of a person materially non-existent, in place of the reflexion, destined itself too to fade, of impressions that she had made on me in the past. A woman who could no longer taste any pleasure with other people ought not any longer to have excited my jealousy, if only my affection had been able to come to the surface. But this was just what was impossible, since it could not find its object, Albertine, save among memories in which she was still alive. Since, merely by thinking of her, I brought her back to life, her infidelities could never be those of a dead woman; the moments at which she had been guilty of them became the present moment, not only for Albertine, but for that one of my various selves who was thinking of her. So that no anachronism could ever separate the

indissoluble couple, in which, to each fresh culprit, was immediately mated a jealous lover, pitiable and always contemporaneous. I had, during the last months, kept her shut up in my own house. But in my imagination now, Albertine was free, she was abusing her freedom, was prostituting herself to this friend or to that. Formerly, I used constantly to dream of the uncertain future that was unfolding itself before us, I endeavoured to read its message. And now, what lay before me, like a counterpart of the future—as absorbing as the future because it was equally uncertain, as difficult to decipher, as mysterious, more cruel still because I had not, as with the future, the possibility or the illusion of influencing it, and also because it unrolled itself to the full extent of my own life without my companion's being present to soothe the anguish that it caused me—was no longer Albertine's Future, it was her Past. Her Past? That is the wrong word, since for jealousy there can be neither past nor future, and what it imagines is invariably the present.

Atmospheric changes, provoking other changes in the inner man, awaken forgotten variants of himself, upset the somnolent course of habit, restore their old force to certain memories, to certain sufferings. How much the more so with me if this change of weather recalled to me the weather in which Albertine, at Balbec, under the threat of rain, it might be, used to set out, heaven knows why, upon long rides, in the clinging mail-armour of her waterproof. If she had lived, no doubt to-day, in this so similar weather, she would be setting out, in Touraine, upon a corresponding expedition. Since she could do so no longer, I ought not to have been pained by the thought; but, as with amputated cripples, the slightest

change in the weather revived my pains in the member that had ceased, now, to belong to me.

All of a sudden it was an impression which I had not felt for a long time—for it had remained dissolved in the fluid and invisible expanse of my memory—that became crystallised. Many years ago, when somebody mentioned her bath-wrap, Albertine had blushed. At that time I was not jealous of her. But since then I had intended to ask her if she could remember that conversation, and why she had blushed. This had worried me all the more because I had been told that the two girls, Léa's friends, frequented the bathing establishment of the hotel, and, it was said, not merely for the purpose of taking baths. But, for fear of annoying Albertine, or else deciding to await some more opportune moment, I had always refrained from mentioning it to her and in time had ceased to think about it. And all of a sudden, some time after Albertine's death, I recalled this memory, stamped with the mark, at once irritating and solemn, of riddles left for ever insoluble by the death of the one person who could have interpreted them. Might I not at least try to make certain that Albertine had never done anything wrong in that bathing establishment. By sending some one to Balbec I might perhaps succeed. While she was alive, I should doubtless have been unable to learn anything. But people's tongues become strangely loosened and they are ready to report a misdeed when they need no longer fear the culprit's resentment. As the constitution of our imagination, which has remained rudimentary, simplified (not having passed through the countless transformations which improve upon the primitive models of human inventions, barely recognisable, whether it be

the barometer, the balloon, the telephone, or anything else, in their ultimate perfection), allows us to see only a very few things at one time, the memory of the bathing establishment occupied the whole field of my inward vision.

Sometimes I came in collision in the dark lanes of sleep with one of those bad dreams, which are not very serious for several reasons, one of these being that the sadness which they engender lasts for barely an hour after we awake, like the weakness that is caused by an artificial soporific. For another reason also, namely that we encounter them but very rarely, no more than once in two or three years. And moreover it remains uncertain whether we have encountered them before, whether they have not rather that aspect of not being seen for the first time which is projected over them by an illusion, a subdivision (for duplication would not be a strong enough term).

Of course, since I entertained doubts as to the life, the death of Albertine, I ought long since to have begun to make inquiries, but the same weariness, the same cowardice which had made me give way to Albertine when she was with me prevented me from undertaking anything since I had ceased to see her. And yet from a weakness that had dragged on for years on end, a flash of energy sometimes emerged. I decided to make this investigation which, after all, was perfectly natural. One would have said that nothing else had occurred in Albertine's whole life. I asked myself whom I could best send down to make inquiries on the spot, at Balbec. Aimé seemed to me to be a suitable person. Apart from his thorough knowledge of the place, he belonged to that category of

plebeian folk who have a keen eye to their own advantage, are loyal to those whom they serve, indifferent to any thought of morality, and of whom—because, if we pay them well, in their obedience to our will, they suppress everything that might in one way or another go against it, shewing themselves as incapable of indiscretion, weakness or dishonesty as they are devoid of scruples—we say: "They are good fellows." In such we can repose an absolute confidence. When Aimé had gone, I thought how much more to the point it would have been if, instead of sending him down to try to discover something there, I had now been able to question Albertine herself. And at once the thought of this question which I would have liked, which it seemed to me that I was about to put to her, having brought Albertine into my presence—not thanks to an effort of resurrection but as though by one of those chance encounters which, as is the case with photographs that are not posed, with snapshots, always make the person appear more alive—at the same time in which I imagined our conversation, I felt how impossible it was; I had just approached a fresh aspect of the idea that Albertine was dead, Albertine who inspired in me that affection which we have for the absent the sight of whom does not come to correct the embellished image, inspiring also sorrow that this absence must be eternal and that the poor child should be deprived for ever of the joys of life. And immediately, by an abrupt change of mood, from the torments of jealousy I passed to the despair of separation.

What filled my heart now was, in the place of odious suspicions, the affectionate memory of hours of confiding tenderness spent with the sister whom death had really

made me lose, since my grief was related not to what Albertine had been to me, but to what my heart, anxious to participate in the most general emotions of love, had gradually persuaded me that she was; then I became aware that the life which had bored me so—so, at least. I thought—had been on the contrary delicious; to the briefest moments spent in talking to her of things that were quite insignificant, I felt now that there was added, amalgamated a pleasure which at the time had not—it is true—been perceived by me, but which was already responsible for making me turn so perseveringly to those moments to the exclusion of any others; the most trivial incidents which I recalled, a movement that she had made in the carriage by my side, or to sit down facing me in my room, dispersed through my spirit an eddy of sweetness and sorrow which little by little overwhelmed it altogether.

This room in which we used to dine had never seemed to me attractive, I had told Albertine that it was attractive merely in order that my mistress might be content to live in it. Now the curtains, the chairs, the books, had ceased to be unimportant. Art is not alone in imparting charm and mystery to the most insignificant things; the same power of bringing them into intimate relation with ourself is committed also to grief. At the moment I had paid no attention to the dinner which we had eaten together after our return from the Bois, before I went to the Verdurins', and towards the beauty, the solemn sweetness of which I now turned, my eyes filled with tears. An impression of love is out of proportion to the other impressions of life, but it is not when it is lost in their midst that we can take account of it. It is not from its foot, in the

tumult of the street and amid the thronging houses, it is when we are far away, that from the slope of a neighbouring hill, at a distance from which the whole town has disappeared, or appears only as a confused mass upon the ground, we can, in the calm detachment of solitude and dusk, appreciate, unique, persistent and pure, the height of a cathedral. I tried to embrace the image of Albertine through my tears as I thought of all the serious and sensible things that she had said that evening.

One morning I thought that I could see the oblong shape of a hill swathed in mist, that I could taste the warmth of a cup of chocolate, while my heart was horribly wrung by the memory of that afternoon on which Albertine had come to see me and I had kissed her for the first time: the fact was that I had just heard the hiccough of the hot-water pipes, the furnace having just been started. And I flung angrily away an invitation which Françoise brought me from Mme. Verdurin; how the impression that I had felt when I went to dine for the first time at la Raspelière, that death does not strike us all at the same age, overcame me with increased force now that Albertine was dead, so young, while Brichot continued to dine with Mme. Verdurin who was still entertaining and would perhaps continue to entertain for many years to come. At once the name of Brichot recalled to me the end of that evening party when he had accompanied me home, when I had seen from the street the light of Albertine's lamp. I had already thought of it upon many occasions, but I had not approached this memory from the same angle. Then when I thought of the void which I should now find upon returning home, that I should never again see from the street Albertine's

room, the light in which was extinguished for ever, I realised how, that evening, in parting from Brichot, I had thought that I was bored, that I regretted my inability to stroll about the streets and make love elsewhere, I realised how greatly I had been mistaken, that it was only because the treasure whose reflexions came down to me in the street had seemed to be entirely in my possession that I had failed to calculate its value, which meant that it seemed to me of necessity inferior to pleasures, however slight, of which however, in seeking to imagine them, I enhanced the value. I realised how much that light which had seemed to me to issue from a prison contained for me of fulness, of life and sweetness, all of which was but the realisation of what had for a moment intoxicated me and had then seemed for ever impossible: I began to understand that this life which I had led in Paris in a home which was also her home, was precisely the realisation of that profound peace of which I had dreamed on the night when Albertine had slept under the same roof as myself, at Balbec. The conversation which I had had with Albertine after our return from the Bois before that party at the Verdurins', I should not have been consoled had it never occurred, that conversation which had to some extent introduced Albertine into my intellectual life and in certain respects had made us one. For no doubt if I returned with melting affection to her intelligence, to her kindness to myself, it was not because they were any greater than those of other persons whom I had known. Had not Mme. de Cambremer said to me at Balbec: "What! You might be spending your days with Elstir, who is a genius, and you spend them with your cousin!" Albertine's intelligence

pleased me because, by association, it revived in me what I called its sweetness as we call the sweetness of a fruit a certain sensation which exists only in our palate. And in fact, when I thought of Albertine's intelligence, my lips instinctively protruded and tasted a memory of which I preferred that the reality should remain external to me and should consist in the objective superiority of another person. There could be no denying that I had known people whose intelligence was greater. But the infinitude of love, or its egoism, has the result that the people whom we love are those whose intellectual and moral physiognomy is least defined objectively in our eyes, we alter them incessantly to suit our desires and fears, we do not separate them from ourself, they are only a vast and vague place in which our affections take root. We have not of our own body, into which flow perpetually so many discomforts and pleasures, as clear an outline as we have of a tree or house, or of a passer-by. And where I had gone wrong was perhaps in not making more effort to know Albertine in herself. Just as, from the point of view of her charm, I had long considered only the different positions that she occupied in my memory in the procession of years, and had been surprised to see that she had been spontaneously enriched with modifications which were due merely to the difference of perspective, so I ought to have sought to understand her character as that of an ordinary person, and thus perhaps, finding an explanation of her persistence in keeping her secret from me, might have averted the continuance between us, with that strange desperation, of the conflict which had led to the death of Albertine. And I then felt, with an intense pity for her, shame at having survived her. It

seemed to me indeed, in the hours when I suffered least, that I had derived a certain benefit from her death, for a woman is of greater service to our life if she is in it, instead of being an element of happiness, an instrument of sorrow, and there is not a woman in the world the possession of whom is as precious as that of the truths which she reveals to us by causing us to suffer. In these moments, thinking at once of my grandmother's death and of Albertine's, it seemed to me that my life was stained with a double murder from which only the cowardice of the world could absolve me. I had dreamed of being understood by Albertine, of not being scorned by her, thinking that it was for the great happiness of being understood, of not being scorned, when so many other people might have served me better. We wish to be understood, because we wish to be loved, and we wish to be loved because we are in love. The understanding of other people is immaterial and their love importunate. My joy at having possessed a little of Albertine's intelligence and of her heart arose not from their intrinsic worth, but from the fact that this possession was a stage farther towards the complete possession of Albertine, a possession which had been my goal and my chimera, since the day on which I first set eyes on her. When we speak of the "kindness" of a woman, we do no more perhaps than project outside ourself the pleasure that we feel in seeing her, like children when they say: "My dear little bed, my dear little pillow, my dear little hawthorns." Which explains incidentally why men never say of a woman who is not unfaithful to them: "She is so kind," and say it so often of a woman by whom they are betrayed. Mme. de Cambremer was right in thinking

that Elstir's intellectual charm was greater. But we cannot judge in the same way the charm of a person who is, like everyone else, exterior to ourself, painted upon the horizon of our mind, and that of a person who, in consequence of an error in localisation which has been due to certain accidents but is irreparable, has lodged herself in our own body so effectively that the act of asking ourself in retrospect whether she did not look at a woman on a particular day in the corridor of a little seaside railway-train makes us feel the same anguish as would a surgeon probing for a bullet in our heart. A simple crescent of bread, but one which we are eating, gives us more pleasure than all the ortolans, young rabbits and barbavelles that were set before Louis XV and the blade of grass which, a few inches away, quivers before our eye, while we are lying upon the mountain-side, may conceal from us the sheer summit of another peak, if it is several miles away.

Furthermore, our mistake is our failure to value the intelligence, the kindness of a woman whom we love, however slight they may be. Our mistake is our remaining indifferent to the kindness, the intelligence of others. Falsehood begins to cause us the indignation, and kindness the gratitude which they ought always to arouse in us, only if they proceed from a woman with whom we are in love, and bodily desire has the marvellous faculty of restoring its value to intelligence and a solid base to the moral life. Never should I find again that divine thing, a person with whom I might talk freely of everything, in whom I might confide. Confide? But did not other people offer me greater confidence than Albertine? Had I not had with others more unrestricted conversa-

tions? The fact is that confidence, conversation, trivial things in themselves, what does it matter whether they are more or less imperfect, if only there enters into them love, which alone is divine. I could see Albertine now, seated at her pianola, rosy beneath her dark hair, I could feel, against my lips which she was trying to part, her tongue, her motherly, inedible, nourishing and holy tongue whose secret flame and dew meant that even when Albertine let it glide over the surface of my throat or stomach, those caresses, superficial but in a sense offered by her inmost flesh, turned outward like a cloth that is turned to shew its lining, assumed even in the most external touches as it were the mysterious delight of a penetration.

All these so pleasant moments which nothing would ever restore to me again, I cannot indeed say that what made me feel the loss of them was despair. To feel despair, we must still be attached to that life which could end only in disaster. I had been in despair at Balbec when I saw the day break and realised that none of the days to come could ever be a happy day for me. I had remained fairly selfish since then, but the self to which I was now attached, the self which constituted those vital reserves that were set in action by the instinct of self-preservation, this self was no longer alive; when I thought of my strength, of my vital force, of the best elements in myself, I thought of a certain treasure which I had possessed (which I had been alone in possessing since other people could not know exactly the sentiment, concealed in myself, which it had inspired in me) and which no one could ever again take from me since I possessed it no longer.

And, to tell the truth, when I had ever possessed it, it had been only because I had liked to think of myself as possessing it. I had not merely committeed the imprudence, when I cast my eyes upon Albertine and lodged her in my heart, of making her live within me, nor that other imprudence of combining a domestic affection with sensual pleasure. I had sought also to persuade myself that our relations were love, that we were mutually practising the relations that are called love, because she obediently returned the kisses that I gave her, and, having come in time to believe this, I had lost not merely a woman whom I loved but a woman who loved me, my sister, my child, my tender mistress. And in short, I had received a blessing and a curse which Swann had not known, for after all during the whole of the time in which he had been in love with Odette and had been so jealous of her, he had barely seen her, having found it so difficult, on certain days when she put him off at the last moment, to gain admission to her. But afterwards he had had her to himself, as his wife, and until the day of his death. I, on the contrary, while I was so jealous of Albertine, more fortunate than Swann, had had her with me in my own house. I had realised as a fact the state of which Swann had so often dreamed and which did not realise materially until it had ceased to interest him. But after all I had not managed to keep Albertine as he had kept Odette. She had fled from me, she was dead. For nothing is ever repeated exactly, and the most analogous lives which, thanks to the kinship of the persons and the similarity of the circumstances, we may select in order to represent them as symmetrical remain in many respects opposite.

By losing my life I should not have lost very much; I should have lost now only an empty form, the empty frame of a work of art. Indifferent as to what I might in the future put in it, but glad and proud to think of what it had contained, I dwelt upon the memory of those so pleasant hours, and this moral support gave me a feeling of comfort which the approach of death itself would not have disturbed.

How she used to hasten to see me at Balbec when I sent for her, lingering only to sprinkle scent on her hair to please me. These images of Balbec and Paris which I loved to see again were the pages still so recent, and so quickly turned, of her short life. All this which for me was only memory had been for her action, action as precipitate as that of a tragedy towards a sudden death. People develop in one way inside us, but in another way outside us (I had indeed felt this on those evenings when I remarked in Albertine an enrichment of qualities which was due not only to my memory), and these two ways do not fail to react upon each other. Albeit I had, in seeking to know Albertine, then to possess her altogether, obeyed merely the need to reduce by experiment to elements meanly similar to those of our own self the mystery of every other person, I had been unable to do so without exercising an influence in my turn over Albertine's life. Perhaps my wealth, the prospect of a brilliant marriage had attracted her, my jealousy had kept her, her goodness or her intelligence, or her sense of guilt, or her cunning had made her accept, and had led me on to make harsher and harsher a captivity in chains forged simply by the internal process of my mental toil, which had nevertheless had, upon Albertine's life, reactions, destined

themselves to set, by the natural swing of the pendulum, fresh and ever more painful problems to my psychology, since from my prison she had escaped, to go and kill herself upon a horse which but for me she would not have owned, leaving me, even after she was dead, with suspicions the verification of which, if it was to come, would perhaps be more painful to me than the discovery at Balbec that Albertine had known Mlle. Vinteuil, since Albertine would no longer be present to soothe me. So that the long plaint of the soul which thinks that it is living shut up within itself is a monologue in appearance only, since the echoes of reality alter its course and such a life is like an essay in subjective psychology spontaneously pursued, but furnishing from a distance its "action" to the purely realistic novel of another reality, another existence, the vicissitudes of which come in their turn to inflect the curve and change the direction of the psychological essay. How highly geared had been the mechanism, how rapid had been the evolution of our love, and, notwithstanding the sundry delays, interruptions and hesitations of the start, as in certain of Balzac's tales or Schumann's ballads, how sudden the catastrophe! It was in the course of this last year, long as a century to me, so many times had Albertine changed her appearance in my mind between Balbec and her departure from Paris, and also, independently of me and often without my knowledge, changed in herself, that I must place the whole of that happy life of affection which had lasted so short a while, which yet appeared to me with an amplitude, almost an immensity, which now was for ever impossible and yet was indispensable to me. Indispensable without perhaps having been in itself and at the outset

a thing that was necessary since I should not have known Albertine had I not read in an archaeological treatise a description of the church at Balbec, had not Swann, by telling me that this church was almost Persian, directed my taste to the byzantine norman, had not a financial syndicate, by erecting at Balbec a hygienic and comfortable hotel, made my parents decide to hear my supplication and send me to Balbec. To be sure, in that Balbec so long desired I had not found the Persian church of my dreams, nor the eternal mists. Even the famous train at one twenty-two had not corresponded to my mental picture of it. But in compensation for what our imagination leaves us wanting and we give ourself so much unnecessary trouble in trying to find, life does give us something which we were very far from imagining. Who would have told me at Combray, when I lay waiting for my mother's good-night with so heavy a heart, that those anxieties would be healed, and would then break out again one day, not for my mother, but for a girl who would at first be no more, against the horizon of the sea, than a flower upon which my eyes would daily be invited to gaze, but a flower that could think, and in whose mind I should be so childishly anxious to occupy a prominent place, that I should be distressed by her not being aware that I knew Mme. de Villeparisis? Yes, it was the good-night, the kiss of a stranger like this, that, in years to come, was to make me suffer as keenly as I had suffered as a child when my mother was not coming up to my room. Well, this Albertine so necessary, of love for whom my soul was now almost entirely composed, if Swann had not spoken to me of Balbec, I should never have known her. Her life would perhaps have been

longer, mine would have been unprovided with what was now making it a martyrdom. And also it seemed to me that, by my entirely selfish affection, I had allowed Albertine to die just as I had murdered my grandmother. Even later on, even after I had already known her at Balbec, I should have been able not to love her as I was to love her in the sequel. When I gave up Gilberte and knew that I would be able one day to love another woman, I scarcely ventured to entertain a doubt whether, considering simply the past, Gilberte was the only woman whom I had been capable of loving. Well, in the case of Albertine I had no longer any doubt at all, I was sure that it need not have been herself that I loved, that it might have been some one else. To prove this, it would have been sufficient that Mlle. de Stermaria, on the evening when I was going to take her to dine on the island in the Bois, should not have put me off. It was still not too late, and it would have been upon Mlle. de Stermaria that I would have trained that activity of the imagination which makes us extract from a woman so special a notion of the individual that she appears to us unique in herself and predestined and necessary for us. At the most, adopting an almost physiological point of view, I could say that I might have been able to feel this same exclusive love for another woman but not for any other woman. For Albertine, plump and dark, did not resemble Gilberte, tall and ruddy, and yet they were fashioned of the same healthy stuff, and over the same sensual cheeks shone a look in the eyes of both which it was difficult to interpret. They were women of a sort that would never attract the attention of men who, for their part, would do the most extravagant things for

other women who made no appeal to me. A man has almost always the same way of catching cold, and so forth; that is to say, he requires to bring about the event a certain combination of circumstances; it is natural that when he falls in love he should love a certain class of woman, a class which for that matter is very numerous. The two first glances from Albertine which had set me dreaming were not absolutely different from Gilberte's first glances. I could almost believe that the obscure personality, the sensuality, the forward, cunning nature of Gilberte had returned to tempt me, incarnate this time in Albertine's body, a body quite different and yet not without analogies. In Albertine's case, thanks to a wholly different life shared with me into which had been unable to penetrate—in a block of thoughts among which a painful preoccupation maintained a permanent cohesion —any fissure of distraction and oblivion, her living body had indeed not, like Gilberte's, ceased one day to be the body in which I found what I subsequently recognised as being to me (what they would not have been to other men) feminine charms. But she was dead. I should, in time, forget her. Who could tell whether then, the same qualities of rich blood, of uneasy brooding would return one day to spread havoc in my life, but incarnate this time in what feminine form I could not foresee. The example of Gilberte would as little have enabled me to form an idea of Albertine and guess that I should fall in love with her, as the memory of Vinteuil's sonata would have enabled me to imagine his septet. Indeed, what was more, on the first occasions of my meeting Albertine, I might have supposed that it was with other girls that I should fall in love. Besides, she might indeed quite

well have appeared to me, had I met her a year earlier, as dull as a grey sky in which dawn has not yet broken. If I had changed in relation to her, she herself had changed also, and the girl who had come and sat upon my bed on the day of my letter to Mlle de Stermaria was no longer the same girl that I had known at Balbec, whether by a mere explosion of the woman which occurs at the age of puberty, or because of some incident which I have never been able to discover. In any case if she whom I was one day to love must to a certain extent resemble this other, that is to say if my choice of a woman was not entirely free, this meant nevertheless that, trained in a manner that was perhaps inevitable, it was trained upon something more considerable than a person, upon a type of womankind, and this removed all inevitability from my love for Albertine. The woman whose face we have before our eyes more constantly than light itself, since, even when our eyes are shut, we never cease for an instant to adore her beautiful eyes, her beautiful nose, to arrange opportunities of seeing them again, this unique woman—we know quite well that it would have been another woman that would now be unique to us if we had been in another town than that in which we made her acquaintance, if we had explored other quarters of the town, if we had frequented the house of a different hostess. Unique, we suppose; she is innumerable. And yet she is compact, indestructible in our loving eyes, irreplaceable for a long time to come by any other. The truth is that the woman has only raised to life by a sort of magic spell a thousand elements of affection existing in us already in a fragmentary state, which she has assembled, joined together,

bridging every gap between them, it is ourself who by giving her her features have supplied all the solid matter of the beloved object. Whence it comes about that even if we are only one man among a thousand to her and perhaps the last man of them all, to us she is the only woman, the woman towards whom our whole life tends. It was indeed true that I had been quite well aware that this love was not inevitable since it might have occurred with Mlle. de Stermaria, but even without that from my knowledge of the love itself, when I found it to be too similar to what I had known with other women, and also when I felt it to be vaster than Albertine, enveloping her, unconscious of her, like a tide swirling round a tiny rock. But gradually, by dint of living with Albertine, the chains which I myself had forged I was unable to fling off, the habit of associating Albertine's person with the sentiment which she had not inspired made me nevertheless believe that it was peculiar to her, as habit gives to the mere association of ideas between two phenomena, according to a certain school of philosophy, an illusion of the force, the necessity of a law of causation. I had thought that my social relations, my wealth, would dispense me from suffering, and too effectively perhaps since this seemed to dispense me from feeling, loving, imagining; I envied a poor country girl whom her absence of social relations, even by telegraph, allows to ponder for months on end upon a grief which she cannot artificially put to sleep. And now I began to realise that if, in the case of Mme. de Guermantes, endowed with everything that could make the gulf infinite between her and myself, I had seen that gulf suddenly bridged by the opinion that social advantages are nothing

more than inert and transmutable matter, so, in a similar albeit converse fashion, my social relations, my wealth, all the material means by which not only my own position but the civilisation of my age enabled me to profit, had done no more than postpone the conclusion of my struggle against the contrary inflexible will of Albertine upon which no pressure had had any effect. True, I had been able to exchange telegrams, telephone-messages with Saint-Loup, to remain in constant communication with the office at Tours, but had not the delay in waiting for them proved useless, the result nil? And country girls, without social advantages or relations, or human beings enjoying the perfections of civilisation, do they not suffer less, because all of us desire less, because we regret less what we have always known to be inaccessible, what for that reason has continued to seem unreal. We desire more keenly the person who is about to give herself to us; hope anticipates possession; but regret also is an amplifier of desire. Mlle. de Stermaria's refusal to come and dine with me on the island in the Bois was what had prevented her from becoming the object of my love. This might have sufficed also to make me fall in love with her if afterwards I had seen her again before it was too late. As soon as I had known that she was not coming, entertaining the improbable hypothesis—which had been proved correct—that perhaps she had a jealous lover who prevented her from seeing other men, that I should never see her again, I had suffered so intensely that I would have given anything in the world to see her, and it was one of the keenest anguishes that I had ever felt that Saint-Loup's arrival had soothed. After we have reached a certain age our loves, our mistresses

are begotten of our anguish; our past, and the physical lesions in which it is recorded, determine our future. In Albertine's case, the fact that it would not necessarily be she that I must love was, even without the example of those previous loves, inscribed in the history of my love for her, that is to say for herself and her friends. For it was not a single love like my love for Gilberte, but was created by division among a number of girls. That it was on her account and because they appeared to me more or less similar to her that I had amused myself with her friends was quite possible. The fact remains that for a long time hesitation among them all was possible, my choice strayed from one to another, and when I thought that I preferred one, it was enough that another should keep me waiting, should refuse to see me, to make me feel the first premonitions of love for her. Often at that time when Andrée was coming to see me at Balbec, if, shortly before Andrée was expected, Albertine failed to keep an appointment, my heart throbbed without ceasing, I felt that I would never see her again and that it was she whom I loved. And when Andrée came it was in all seriousness that I said to her (as I said it to her in Paris after I had learned that Albertine had known Mlle. Vinteuil) what she supposed me to be saying with a purpose, without sincerity, what I would indeed have said and in the same words had I been enjoying myself the day before with Albertine: "Alas! If you had only come sooner, now I am in love with some one else." Again, in this case of Andrée, replaced by Albertine after I learned that the latter had known Mlle. Vinteuil, my love had alternated between them, so that after all there had been only one love at a time. But a case had oc-

curred earlier in which I had more or less quarrelled with two of the girls. The one who took the first step towards a reconciliation would restore my peace of mind, it was the other that I would love, if she remained cross with me, which does not mean that it was not with the former that I would form a definite tie, for she would console me—albeit ineffectively—for the harshness of the other, whom I would end by forgetting if she did not return to me again. Now, it so happened that, while I was convinced that one or the other at least would come back to me, for some time neither of them did so. My anguish was therefore twofold, and twofold my love, while I reserved to myself the right to cease to love the one who came back, but until that happened continued to suffer on account of them both. It is the lot of a certain period in life which may come to us quite early that we are made less amorous by a person than by a desertion, in which we end by knowing one thing and one thing only about that person, her face having grown dim, her heart having ceased to exist, our preference of her being quite recent and inexplicable; namely that what we need to make our suffering cease is a message from her: "May I come and see you?" My separation from Albertine on the day when Françoise informed me: "Mademoiselle Albertine has gone" was like an allegory of countless other separations. For very often in order that we may discover that we are in love, perhaps indeed in order that we may fall in love, the day of separation must first have come. In the case when it is an unkept appointment, a written refusal that dictates our choice, our imagination lashed by suffering sets about its work so swiftly, fashions with so frenzied a rapidity a love that had scarcely begun, and

had been quite featureless, destined, for months past, to remain a rough sketch, that now and again our intelligence which has not been able to keep pace with our heart, cries out in astonishment: "But you must be mad, what are these strange thoughts that are making you so miserable? That is not real life." And indeed at that moment, had we not been roused to action by the betrayer, a few healthy distractions that would calm our heart physically would be sufficient to bring our love to an end. In any case if this life with Albertine was not in its essence necessary, it had become indispensable to me. I had trembled when I was in love with Mme. de Guermantes because I used to say to myself that, with her too abundant means of attraction, not only beauty but position, wealth, she would be too much at liberty to give herself to all and sundry, that I should have too little hold over her. Albertine had been penniless, obscure, she must have been anxious to marry me. And yet I had not been able to possess her exclusively. Whatever be our social position, however wise our precautions, when the truth is confessed we have no hold over the life of another person. Why had she not said to me: "I have those tastes," I would have yielded, would have allowed her to gratify them. In a novel that I had been reading there was a woman whom no objurgation from the man who was in love with her could induce to speak. When I read the book, I had thought this situation absurd; had I been the hero, I assured myself, I would first of all have forced the woman to speak, then we could have come to an understanding; what was the good of all this unnecessary misery? But I saw now that we are not free to abstain from forging the chains of our own misery,

and that however well we may know our own will, other people do not obey it.

And yet those painful, those ineluctable truths which dominated us and to which we were blind, the truth of our sentiments, the truth of our destiny, how often without knowing it, without meaning it, we have expressed them in words in which we ourself doubtless thought that we were lying, but the prophetic value of which has been established by subsequent events. I could recall many words that each of us had uttered without knowing at the time the truth that they contained, which indeed we had said thinking that each was deceiving the other, words the falsehood of which was very slight, quite uninteresting, wholly confined within our pitiable insincerity, compared with what they contained that was unknown to us. Lies, mistakes, falling short of the reality which neither of us perceived, truth extending beyond it, the truth of our natures the essential laws of which escape us and require time before they reveal themselves, the truth of our destinies also. I had supposed that I was lying when I said to her at Balbec: "The more I see you, the more I shall love you" (and yet it was that intimacy at every moment that had, through the channel of jealousy, attached me so strongly to her), "I know that I could be of use to you intellectually"; and in Paris: "Do be careful. Remember that if you met with an accident, it would break my heart." And she: "But I may meet with an accident"; and I in Paris on the evening when I pretended that I wished to part from her: "Let me look at you once again since presently I shall not be seeing you again, and it will be for ever!" and when, that same evening, she looked round the room:

"To think that I shall never see this room again, those books, that pianola, the whole house, I cannot believe it and yet it is true." In her last letters again, when she wrote—probably saying to herself: "This is the stuff to tell him"—"I leave with you the best part of myself" (and was it not now indeed to the fidelity, to the strength, which too was, alas, frail, of my memory that were entrusted her intelligence, her goodness, her beauty?) and "that twofold twilight (since night was falling and we were about to part) will be effaced from my thoughts only when the darkness is complete," that phrase written on the eve of the day when her mind had indeed been plunged in complete darkness, and when, it may well have been, in the last glimmer, so brief but stretched out to infinity by the anxiety of the moment, she had indeed perhaps seen again our last drive together and in that instant when everything forsakes us and we create a faith for ourself, as atheists turn Christian upon the battlefield, she had perhaps summoned to her aid the friend whom she had so often cursed but had so deeply respected, who himself—for all religions are alike—was so cruel as to hope that she had also had time to see herself as she was, to give her last thought to him, to confess her sins at length to him, to die in him. But to what purpose, since even if, at that moment, she had had time to see herself as she was, we had neither of us understood where our happiness lay, what we ought to do, until that happiness, because that happiness was no longer possible, until and because we could no longer realise it. So long as things are possible we postpone them, and they cannot assume that force of attraction, that apparent ease of realisation save when, projected upon the ideal void of

the imagination, they are removed from their burdensome, degrading submersion in the vital medium. The thought that we must die is more painful than the act of dying, but less painful than the thought that another person is dead, which, becoming once more a plane surface after having engulfed a person, extends without even an eddy at the point of disappearance, a reality from which that person is excluded, in which there exists no longer any will, any knowledge, and from which it is as difficult to reascend to the thought that the person has lived, as it is difficult, with the still recent memory of her life, to think that she is now comparable with the unsubstantial images, with the memories left us by the characters in a novel which we have been reading.

At any rate I was glad that, before she died, she had written me that letter, and above all had sent me that final message which proved to me that she would have returned had she lived. It seemed to me that it was not merely more soothing, but more beautiful also, that the event would have been incomplete without this note, would not have had so markedly the form of art and destiny. In reality it would have been just as markedly so had it been different; for every event is like a mould of a particular shape, and, whatever it be, it imposes, upon the series of incidents which it has interrupted and seems to have concluded, a pattern which we believe to be the only one possible, because we do not know the other which might have been substituted for it. I repeated to myself: "Why had she not said to me: 'I have those tastes,' I would have yielded, would have allowed her to gratify them, at this moment I should be kissing her still." What a sorrow to have to remind

myself that she had lied to me thus when she swore to me, three days before she left me, that she had never had with Mlle. Vinteuil's friend those relations which at the moment when Albertine swore it her blush had confessed. Poor child, she had at least had the honesty to refuse to swear that the pleasure of seeing Mlle. Vinteuil again had no part in her desire to go that day to the Verdurins'. Why had she not made her admission complete, why had she then invented that inconceivable tale? Perhaps however it was partly my fault that she had never, despite all my entreaties which were powerless against her denial, been willing to say to me: "I have those tastes." It was perhaps partly my fault because at Balbec, on the day when, after Mme. de Cambremer's call, I had had my first explanation with Albertine, and when I was so far from imagining that she could have had, in any case, anything more than an unduly passionate friendship with Andrée, I had expressed with undue violence my disgust at that kind of moral lapse, had condemned it in too categorical a fashion. I could not recall whether Albertine had blushed when I had innocently expressed my horror of that sort of thing, I could not recall it, for it is often only long afterwards that we would give anything to know what attitude a person adopted at a moment when we were paying no attention to it, an attitude which, later on, when we think again of our conversation, would elucidate a poignant difficulty. But in our memory there is a blank, there is no trace of it. And very often we have not paid sufficient attention, at the actual moment, to the things which might even then have seemed to us important, we have not properly heard a sentence, have not noticed a gesture, or else we have forgotten

them. And when later on, eager to discover a truth, we reascend from deduction to deduction, turning over our memory like a sheaf of written evidence, when we arrive at that sentence, at that gesture, which it is impossible to recall, we begin again a score of times the same process, but in vain: the road goes no farther. Had she blushed? I did not know whether she had blushed, but she could not have failed to hear, and the memory of my speech had brought her to a halt later on when perhaps she had been on the point of making her confession to me. And now she no longer existed anywhere, I might scour the earth from pole to pole without finding Albertine. The reality which had closed over her was once more unbroken, had obliterated every trace of the creature who had sunk into its depths. She was no more now than a name, like that Mme. de Charlus of whom the people who had known her said with indifference: "She was charming." But I was unable to conceive for more than an instant the existence of this reality of which Albertine had no knowledge, for in myself my mistress existed too vividly, in myself in whom every sentiment, every thought bore some reference to her life. Perhaps if she had known, she would have been touched to see that her lover had not forgotten her, now that her own life was finished, and would have been moved by things which in the past had left her indifferent. But as we would choose to refrain from infidelities, however secret they might be, so fearful are we that she whom we love is not refraining from them, I was alarmed by the thought that if the dead do exist anywhere, my grandmother was as well aware of my oblivion as Albertine of my remembrance. And when all is said, even in the case of a single

dead person, can we be sure that the joy which we should feel in learning that she knows certain things would compensate for our alarm at the thought that she knows *all;* and, however agonising the sacrifice, would we not sometimes abstain from keeping after their death as friends those whom we have loved, from the fear of having them also as judges?

My jealous curiosity as to what Albertine might have done was unbounded. I suborned any number of women from whom I learned nothing. If this curiosity was so keen, it was because people do not die at once for us, they remain bathed in a sort of *aura* of life in which there is no true immortality but which means that they continue to occupy our thoughts in the same way as when they were alive. It is as though they were travelling abroad. This is a thoroughly pagan survival. Conversely, when we have ceased to love her, the curiosity which the person arouses dies before she herself is dead. Thus I would no longer have taken any step to find out with whom Gilberte had been strolling on a certain evening in the Champs-Elysées. Now I felt that these curiosities were absolutely alike, had no value in themselves, were incapable of lasting, but I continued to sacrifice everything to the cruel satisfaction of this transient curiosity, albeit I knew in advance that my enforced separation from Albertine, by the fact of her death, would lead me to the same indifference as had resulted from my deliberate separation from Gilberte.

If she could have known what was about to happen, she would have stayed with me. But this meant no more than that, once she saw herself dead, she would have preferred, in my company, to remain alive. Simply in view

of the contradiction that it implied, such a supposition was absurd. But it was not innocuous, for in imagining how glad Albertine would be, if she could know, if she could retrospectively understand, to come back to me, I saw her before me, I wanted to kiss her; and alas, it was impossible, she would never come back, she was dead. My imagination sought for her in the sky, through the nights on which we had gazed at it when still together; beyond that moonlight which she loved, I tried to raise up to her my affection so that it might be a consolation to her for being no longer alive, and this love for a being so remote was like a religion, my thoughts rose towards her like prayers. Desire is very powerful, it engenders belief; I had believed that Albertine would not leave me because I desired that she might not. Because I desired it, I began to believe that she was not dead; I took to reading books upon table-turning, I began to believe in the possibility of the immortality of the soul. But that did not suffice me. I required that, after my own death, I should find her again in her body, as though eternity were like life. Life, did I say! I was more exacting still. I would have wished not to be deprived for ever by death of the pleasures of which however it is not alone in robbing us. For without her death they would eventually have grown faint, they had begun already to do so by the action of long-established habit, of fresh curiosities. Besides, had she been alive, Albertine, even physically, would gradually have changed, day by day I should have adapted myself to that change. But my memory, calling up only detached moments of her life, asked to see her again as she would already have ceased to be, had she lived; what it required was a miracle which would

satisfy the natural and arbitrary limitations of memory which cannot emerge from the past. With the simplicity of the old theologians, I imagined her furnishing me not indeed with the explanations which she might possibly have given me but, by a final contradiction, with those that she had always refused me during her life. And thus, her death being a sort of dream, my love would seem to her an unlooked-for happiness; I saw in death only the convenience and optimism of a solution which simplifies, which arranges everything. Sometimes it was not so far off, it was not in another world that I imagined our reunion. Just as in the past, when I knew Gilberte only from playing with her in the Champs-Elysées, at home in the evening I used to imagine that I was going to receive a letter from her in which she would confess her love for me, that she was coming into the room, so a similar force of desire, no more embarrassed by the laws of nature which ran counter to it than on the former occasion in the case of Gilberte, when after all it had not been mistaken since it had had the last word, made me think now that I was going to receive a message from Albertine, informing me that she had indeed met with an accident while riding, but that for romantic reasons (and as, after all, has sometimes happened with people whom we have long believed to be dead) she had not wished me to hear of her recovery and now, repentant, asked to be allowed to come and live with me for ever. And, making quite clear to myself the nature of certain harmless manias in people who otherwise appear sane, I felt coexisting in myself the certainty that she was dead and the incessant hope that I might see her come into the room.

I had not yet received any news from Aimé, albeit he must by now have reached Balbec. No doubt my inquiry turned upon a secondary point, and one quite arbitrarily selected. If Albertine's life had been really culpable, it must have contained many other things of far greater importance, which chance had not allowed me to touch, as it had allowed me that conversation about the wrapper thanks to Albertine's blushes. It was quite arbitrarily that I had been presented with that particular day, which many years later I was seeking to reconstruct. If Albertine had been a lover of women, there were thousands of other days in her life her employment of which I did not know and about which it might be as interesting for me to learn; I might have sent Aimé to many other places in Balbec, to many other towns than Balbec. But these other days, precisely because I did not know how she had spent them, did not represent themselves to my imagination. They had no existence. Things, people did not begin to exist for me until they assumed in my imagination an individual existence. If there were thousands of others like them, they became for me representative of all the rest. If I had long felt a desire to know, in the matter of my suspicions with regard to Albertine, what exactly had happened in the baths, it was in the same manner in which, in the matter of my desires for women, and although I knew that there were any number of girls and lady's-maids who could satisfy them and whom chance might just as easily have led me to hear mentioned, I wished to know—since it was of them that Saint-Loup had spoken to me—the girl who frequented houses of ill fame and Mme. Putbus's maid. The difficulties which my health, my indecision, my

"procrastination," as M. de Charlus called it, placed in the way of my carrying out any project, had made me put off from day to day, from month to month, from year to year, the elucidation of certain suspicions as also the accomplishment of certain desires. But I kept them in my memory promising myself that I would not forget to learn the truth of them, because they alone obsessed me (since the others had no form in my eyes, did not exist), and also because the very accident that had chosen them out of the surrounding reality gave me a guarantee that it was indeed in them that I should come in contact with a trace of reality, of the true and coveted life.

Besides, from a single fact, if it is certain, can we not, like a scientist making experiments, extract the truth as to all the orders of similar facts? Is not a single little fact, if it is well chosen, sufficient to enable the experimenter to deduce a general law which will make him know the truth as to thousands of analogous facts?

Albertine might indeed exist in my memory only in the state in which she had successively appeared to me in the course of her life, that is to say subdivided according to a series of fractions of time, my mind, reestablishing unity in her, made her a single person, and it was upon this person that I sought to bring a general judgment to bear, to know whether she had lied to me, whether she loved women, whether it was in order to be free to associate with them that she had left me. What the woman in the baths would have to say might perhaps put an end for ever to my doubts as to Albertine's morals.

My doubts! Alas, I had supposed that it would be immaterial to me, even pleasant, not to see Albertine

again, until her departure revealed to me my error. Similarly her death had shewn me how greatly I had been mistaken when I believed that I hoped at times for her death and supposed that it would be my deliverance. So it was that, when I received Aimé's letter, I realised that, if I had not until then suffered too painfully from my doubts as to Albertine's virtue, it was because in reality they were not doubts at all. My happiness, my life required that Albertine should be virtuous, they had laid it down once and for all time that she was. Furnished with this preservative belief, I could without danger allow my mind to play sadly with suppositions to which it gave a form but added no faith. I said to myself, "She is perhaps a woman-lover," as we say "I may die to-night"; we say it, but we do not believe it, we make plans for the morrow. This explains why, believing mistakenly that I was uncertain whether Albertine did or did not love women, and believing in consequence that a proof of Albertine's guilt would not give me anything that I had not already taken into account, I was able to feel before the pictures, insignificant to anyone else, which Aimé's letter called up to me, an unexpected anguish, the most painful that I had ever yet felt, and one that formed with those pictures, with the picture, alas! of Albertine herself, a sort of precipitate, as chemists say, in which the whole was invisible and of which the text of Aimé's letter, which I isolate in a purely conventional fashion, can give no idea whatsoever, since each of the words that compose it was immediately transformed, coloured for ever by the suffering that it had aroused.

"MONSIEUR,

"Monsieur will kindly forgive me for not having written sooner to Monsieur. The person whom Monsieur instructed me to see had gone away for a few days, and, anxious to justify the confidence which Monsieur had placed in me, I did not wish to return empty-handed. I have just spoken to this person who remembers (Mlle. A.) quite well." Aimé who possessed certain rudiments of culture meant to italicise *Mlle. A.* between inverted commas. But when he meant to write inverted commas, he wrote brackets, and when he meant to write something in brackets he put it between inverted commas. Thus it was that Françoise would say that some one *stayed* in my street meaning that he abode there, and that one could *abide* for a few minutes, meaning *stay*, the mistakes of popular speech consisting merely, as often as not, in interchanging—as for that matter the French language has done—terms which in the course of centuries have replaced one another. "According to her the thing that Monsieur supposed is absolutely certain. For one thing, it was she who looked after (Mlle. A.) whenever she came to the baths. (Mlle. A.) came very often to take her bath with a tall woman older than herself, always dressed in grey, whom the bath-woman without knowing her name recognised from having often seen her going after girls. But she took no notice of any of them after she met (Mlle. A.). She and (Mlle. A.) always shut themselves up in the dressing-box, remained there a very long time, and the lady in grey used to give at least 10 francs as a tip to the person to whom I spoke. As this person said to me, you can imagine that if they were just stringing beads, they wouldn't have given a tip

of ten francs. (Mlle. A.) used to come also sometimes with a woman with a very dark skin and long-handled glasses. But (Mlle. A.) came most often with girls younger than herself, especially one with a high complexion. Apart from the lady in grey, the people whom (Mlle. A.) was in the habit of bringing were not from Balbec and must indeed often have come from quite a distance. They never came in together, but (Mlle. A.) would come in, and ask for the door of her box to be left unlocked—as she was expecting a friend, and the person to whom I spoke knew what that meant. This person could not give me any other details, as she does not remember very well, 'which is easily understood after so long an interval.' Besides, this person did not try to find out, because she is very discreet and it was to her advantage, for (Mlle. A.) brought her in a lot of money. She was quite sincerely touched to hear that she was dead. It is true that so young it is a great calamity for her and for her friends. I await Monsieur's orders to know whether I may leave Balbec where I do not think that I can learn anything more. I thank Monsieur again for the little holiday that he has procured me, and which has been very pleasant especially as the weather is as fine as could be. The season promises well for this year. We hope that Monsieur will come and put in a little appearance.

"I can think of nothing else to say that will interest Monsieur."

To understand how deeply these words penetrated my being, the reader must bear in mind that the questions which I had been asking myself with regard to Albertine were not subordinate, immaterial questions, questions of

detail, the only questions as a matter of fact which we ask ourself about anyone who is not ourself, whereby we are enabled to proceed, wrapped in an impenetrable thought, through the midst of suffering, falsehood, vice or death. No, in Albertine's case, they were essential questions: "In her heart of hearts what was she? What were her thoughts? What were her loves? Did she lie to me? Had my life with her been as lamentable as Swann's life with Odette?" And so the point reached by Aimé's reply, even although it was not a general reply —and precisely for that reason—was indeed in Albertine, in myself, the uttermost depths.

At last I saw before my eyes, in that arrival of Albertine at the baths along the narrow lane with the lady in grey, a fragment of that past which seemed to me no less mysterious, no less alarming than I had feared when I imagined it as enclosed in the memory, in the facial expression of Albertine. No doubt anyone but myself might have dismissed as insignificant these details, upon which my inability, now that Albertine was dead, to secure a denial of them from herself, conferred the equivalent of a sort of likelihood. It is indeed probable that for Albertine, even if they had been true, her own misdeeds, if she had admitted them, whether her conscience thought them innocent or reprehensible, whether her sensuality had found them exquisite or distinctly dull, would not have been accompanied by that inexpressible sense of horror from which I was unable to detach them. I myself, with the help of my own love of women, albeit they could not have been the same thing to Albertine, could more or less imagine what she felt. And indeed it was already a first degree of anguish, merely to picture

her to myself desiring as I had so often desired, lying to me as I had so often lied to her, preoccupied with one girl or another, putting herself out for her, as I had done for Mlle. de Stermaria and ever so many others, not to mention the peasant girls whom I met on country roads. Yes, all my own desires helped me to understand, to a certain degree, what hers had been; it was by this time an intense anguish in which all my desires, the keener they had been, had changed into torments that were all the more cruel; as though in this algebra of sensibility they reappeared with the same coefficient but with a minus instead of a plus sign. To Albertine, so far as I was capable of judging her by my own standard, her misdeeds, however anxious she might have been to conceal them from me—which made me suppose that she was conscious of her guilt or was afraid of grieving me—her misdeeds because she had planned them to suit her own taste in the clear light of imagination in which desire plays, appeared to her nevertheless as things of the same nature as the rest of life, pleasures for herself which she had not had the courage to deny herself, griefs for me which she had sought to avoid causing me by concealing them, but pleasures and griefs which might be numbered among the other pleasures and griefs of life. But for me, it was from without, without my having been forewarned, without my having been able myself to elaborate them, it was from Aimé's letter that there had come to me the visions of Albertine arriving at the baths and preparing her gratuity.

No doubt it was because in that silent and deliberate arrival of Albertine with the woman in grey I read the assignation that they had made, that convention of going

to make love in a dressing-box which implied an experience of corruption, the well-concealed organisation of a double life, it was because these images brought me the terrible tidings of Albertine's guilt that they had immediately caused me a physical grief from which they would never in time to come be detached. But at once my grief had reacted upon them: an objective fact, such as an image, differs according to the internal state in which we approach it. And grief is as potent in altering reality as is drunkenness. Combined with these images, suffering had at once made of them something absolutely different from what might be for anyone else a lady in grey, a gratuity, a bath, the street which had witnessed the deliberate arrival of Albertine with the lady in grey. All these images—escaping from a life of falsehood and misconduct such as I had never conceived—my suffering had immediately altered in their very substance, I did not behold them in the light that illuminates earthly spectacles, they were a fragment of another world, of an unknown and accursed planet, a glimpse of Hell. My Hell was all that Balbec, all those neighbouring villages from which, according to Aimé's letter, she frequently collected girls younger than herself whom she took to the baths. That mystery which I had long ago imagined in the country round Balbec and which had been dispelled after I had stayed there, which I had then hoped to grasp again when I knew Albertine because, when I saw her pass me on the beach, when I was mad enough to desire that she might not be virtuous, I thought that she must be its incarnation, how fearfully now everything that related to Balbec was impregnated with it. The names of those stations, Toutainville, Epreville, Parville, grown so fa-

miliar, so soothing, when I heard them shouted at night as I returned from the Verdurins, now that I thought how Albertine had been staying at the last, had gone from there to the second, must often have ridden on her bicycle to the first, they aroused in me an anxiety more cruel than on the first occasion, when I beheld the places with such misgivings, before arriving at a Balbec which I did not yet know. It is one of the faculties of jealousy to reveal to us the extent to which the reality of external facts and the sentiments of the heart are an unknown element which lends itself to endless suppositions. We suppose that we know exactly what things are and what people think, for the simple reason that we do not care about them. But as soon as we feel the desire to know, which the jealous man feels, then it becomes a dizzy kaleidoscope in which we can no longer make out anything. Had Albertine been unfaithful to me? With whom? In what house? Upon what day? The day on which she had said this or that to me? When I remembered that I had in the course of it said this or that? I could not tell. Nor did I know what were her sentiments towards myself, whether they were inspired by financial interest, by affection. And all of a sudden I remembered some trivial incident, for instance that Albertine had wished to go to Saint-Mars le Vêtu, saying that the name interested her, and perhaps simply because she had made the acquaintance of some peasant girl who lived there. But it was nothing that Aimé should have found out all this for me from the woman at the baths, since Albertine must remain eternally unaware that he had informed me, the need to know having always been exceeded, in my love for Albertine, by the

need to shew her that I knew; for this abolished between us the partition of different illusions, without having ever had the result of making her love me more, far from it. And now, after she was dead, the second of these needs had been amalgamated with the effect of the first: I tried to picture to myself the conversation in which I would have informed her of what I had learned, as vividly as the conversation in which I would have asked her to tell me what I did not know; that is to say, to see her by my side, to hear her answering me kindly, to see her cheeks become plump again, her eyes shed their malice and assume an air of melancholy; that is to say, to love her still and to forget the fury of my jealousy in the despair of my loneliness. The painful mystery of this impossibility of ever making her know what I had learned and of establishing our relations upon the truth of what I had only just discovered (and would not have been able, perhaps, to discover, but for the fact of her death) substituted its sadness for the more painful mystery of her conduct. What? To have so keenly desired that Albertine should know that I had heard the story of the baths, Albertine who no longer existed! This again was one of the consequences of our utter inability, when we have to consider the matter of death, to picture to ourself anything but life. Albertine no longer existed. But to me she was the person who had concealed from me that she had assignations with women at Balbec, who imagined that she had succeeded in keeping me in ignorance of them. When we try to consider what happens to us after our own death, is it not still our living self which by mistake we project before us? And is it much more absurd, when all is said, to regret that a woman who no

longer exists is unaware that we have learned what she was doing six years ago than to desire that of ourself, who will be dead, the public shall still speak with approval a century hence? If there is more real foundation in the latter than in the former case, the regrets of my retrospective jealousy proceeded none the less from the same optical error as in other men the desire for posthumous fame. And yet this impression of all the solemn finality that there was in my separation from Albertine, if it had been substituted for a moment for my idea of her misdeeds, only aggravated them by bestowing upon them an irremediable character.

I saw myself astray in life as upon an endless beach where I was alone and, in whatever direction I might turn, would never meet her. Fortunately, I found most appropriately in my memory—as there are always all sorts of things, some noxious, others salutary in that heap from which individual impressions come to light only one by one—I discovered, as a craftsman discovers the material that can serve for what he wishes to make, a speech of my grandmother's. She had said to me, with reference to an improbable story which the bath-woman had told Mme. de Villeparisis: "She is a woman who must suffer from a disease of mendacity." This memory was a great comfort to me. What importance could the story have that the woman had told Aimé? Especially as, after all, she had seen nothing. A girl can come and take baths with her friends without having any evil intention. Perhaps for her own glorification the woman had exaggerated the amount of the gratuity. I had indeed heard Françoise maintain once that my aunt Léonie had said in her hearing that she had "a million a month to spend,"

which was utter nonsense; another time that she had seen my aunt Léonie give Eulalie four thousand-franc notes, whereas a fifty-franc note folded in four seemed to me scarcely probable. And so I sought—and, in course of time, managed—to rid myself of the painful certainty which I had taken such trouble to acquire, tossed to and fro as I still was between the desire to know and the fear of suffering. Then my affection might revive afresh, but, simultaneously with it, a sorrow at being parted from Albertine, during the course of which I was perhaps even more wretched than in the recent hours when it had been jealousy that tormented me. But my jealousy was suddenly revived, when I thought of Balbec, because of the vision which at once reappeared (and which until then had never made me suffer and indeed appeared one of the most innocuous in my memory) of the dining-room at Balbec in the evening, with, on the other side of the windows, all that populace crowded together in the dusk, as before the luminous glass of an aquarium, producing a contact (of which I had never thought) in their conglomeration, between the fishermen and girls of the lower orders and the young ladies jealous of that splendour new to Balbec, that splendour from which, if not their means, at any rate avarice and tradition debarred their parents, young ladies among whom there had certainly been almost every evening Albertine whom I did not then know and who doubtless used to accost some little girl whom she would meet a few minutes later in the dark, upon the sands, or else in a deserted bathing hut at the foot of the cliff. Then it was my sorrow that revived, I had just heard like a sentence of banishment the sound of the lift which, instead of stopping at my floor, went on

higher. And yet the only person from whom I could have hoped for a visit would never come again, she was dead. And in spite of this, when the lift did stop at my floor, my heart throbbed, for an instant I said to myself: "If, after all, it was only a dream! It is perhaps she, she is going to ring the bell, she has come back, Françoise will come in and say with more alarm than anger—for she is even more superstitious than vindicative, and would be less afraid of the living girl than of what she will perhaps take for a ghost—'Monsieur will never guess who is here.'" I tried not to think of anything, to take up a newspaper. But I found it impossible to read the articles written by men who felt no real grief. Of a trivial song, one of them said: "It moves one to *tears*," whereas I myself would have listened to it with joy had Albertine been alive. Another, albeit a great writer, because he had been greeted with cheers when he alighted from a train, said that he had received "an *unforgettable* welcome," whereas I, if it had been I who received that welcome, would not have given it even a moment's thought. And a third assured his readers that, but for its tiresome politics, life in Paris would be "altogether delightful" whereas I knew well that even without politics that life could be nothing but atrocious to me, and would have seemed to me delightful, even with its politics, could I have found Albertine again. The sporting correspondent said (we were in the month of May): "This season of the year is positively painful, let us say rather disastrous, to the true sportsman, for there is nothing, absolutely nothing in the way of game," and the art critic said of the Salon: "In the face of this method of arranging an exhibition we are overwhelmed

by an immense discouragement, by an infinite regret. . . ." If the force of the regret that I was feeling made me regard as untruthful and colourless the expressions of men who had no true happiness or sorrow in their lives, on the other hand the most insignificant lines which could, however, remotely, attach themselves either to Normandy, or to Touraine, or to hydropathic establishments, or to Léa, or to the Princesse de Guermantes, or to love, or to absence, or to infidelity, at once set before my eyes, without my having the time to turn them away from it, the image of Albertine, and my tears started afresh. Besides, in the ordinary course, I could never read these newspapers, for the mere act of opening one of them reminded me at once that I used to open them when Albertine was alive, and that she was alive no longer; I let them drop without having the strength to unfold their pages. Each impression called up an impression that was identical but marred, because there had been cut out of it Albertine's existence, so that I had never the courage to live to the end these mutilated minutes. Indeed, when, little by little, Albertine ceased to be present in my thoughts and all-powerful over my heart, I was stabbed at once if I had occasion, as in the time when she was there, to go into her room, to grope for the light, to sit down by the pianola. Divided among a number of little household gods, she dwelt for a long time in the flame of the candle, the door-bell, the back of a chair, and other domains more immaterial such as a night of insomnia or the emotion that was caused me by the first visit of a woman who had attracted me. In spite of this the few sentences which I read in the course of a day or which my mind recalled that I had read, often aroused

in me a cruel, jealousy. To do this, they required not so much to supply me with a valid argument in favour of the immorality of women as to revive an old impression connected with the life of Albertine. Transported then to a forgotten moment, the force of which my habit of thinking of it had not dulled, and in which Albertine was still alive, her misdeeds became more immediate, more painful, more agonising. Then I asked myself whether I could be certain that the bath-woman's revelations were false. A good way of finding out the truth would be to send Aimé to Touraine, to spend a few days in the neighbourhood of Mme. Bontemps's villa. If Albertine enjoyed the pleasures which one woman takes with others, if it was in order not to be deprived of them any longer that she had left me, she must, as soon as she was free, have sought to indulge in them and have succeeded, in a district which she knew and to which she would not have chosen to retire had she not expected to find greater facilities there than in my house. No doubt there was nothing extraordinary in the fact that Albertine's death had so little altered my preoccupations. When our mistress is alive, a great part of the thoughts which form what we call our loves come to us during the hours when she is not by our side. Thus we acquire the habit of having as the object of our meditation an absent person, and one who, even if she remains absent for a few hours only, during those hours is no more than a memory. And so death does not make any great difference. When Aimé returned, I asked him to go down to Chatellerault, and thus not only by my thoughts, my sorrows, the emotion caused me by a name connected, however remotely, with a certain person, but

even more by all my actions, by the inquiries that I undertook, by the use that I made of my money, all of which was devoted to the discovery of Albertine's actions, I may say that throughout this year my life remained filled with love, with a true bond of affection. And she who was its object was a corpse. We say at times that something may survive of a man after his death, if the man was an artist and took a certain amount of pains with his work. It is perhaps in the same way that a sort of cutting taken from one person and grafted on the heart of another continues to carry on its existence, even when the person from whom it had been detached has perished. Aimé established himself in quarters close to Mme. Bontemps's villa; he made the acquaintance of a maidservant, of a jobmaster from whom Albertine had often hired a carriage by the day. These people had noticed nothing. In a second letter, Aimé informed me that he had learned from a young laundress in the town that Albertine had a peculiar way of gripping her arm when she brought back the clean linen. "But," she said, "the young lady never did anything more." I sent Aimé the money that paid for his journey, that paid for the harm which he had done me by his letter, and at the same time I was making an effort to discount it by telling myself that this was a familiarity which gave no proof of any vicious desire when I received a telegram from Aimé: "Have learned most interesting things have abundant proofs letter follows." On the following day came a letter the envelope of which was enough to make me tremble; I had guessed that it came from Aimé, for everyone, even the humblest of us, has under his control those little familiar spirits at once living and couched in

a sort of trance upon the paper, the characters of his handwriting which he alone possesses. "At first the young laundress refused to tell me anything, she assured me that Mlle. Albertine had never done anything more than pinch her arm. But to get her to talk, I took her out to dinner, I made her drink. Then she told me that Mlle. Albertine used often to meet her on the bank of the Loire, when she went to bathe, that Mlle. Albertine who was in the habit of getting up very early to go and bathe was in the habit of meeting her by the water's edge, at a spot where the trees are so thick that nobody can see you, and besides there is nobody who can see you at that hour in the morning. Then the young laundress brought her friends and they bathed and afterwards, as it was already very hot down here and the sun scorched you even through the trees, they used to lie about on the grass getting dry and playing and caressing each other. The young laundress confessed to me that she loved to amuse herself with her young friends and that seeing Mlle. Albertine was always wriggling against her in her wrapper she made her take it off and used to caress her with her tongue along the throat and arms, even on the soles of her feet which Mlle. Albertine stretched out to her. The laundress undressed too, and they played at pushing each other into the water; after that she told me nothing more, but being entirely at your orders and ready to do anything in the world to please you, I took the young laundress to bed with me. She asked me if I would like her to do to me what she used to do to Mlle. Albertine when she took off her bathing-dress. And she said to me: 'If you could have seen how she used to quiver, that young lady, she said to me:

(oh, it's just heavenly) and she got so excited that she could not keep from biting me.' I could still see the marks on the girl's arms. And I can understand Mlle. Albertine's pleasure, for the girl is really a very good performer."

I had indeed suffered at Balbec when Albertine told me of her friendship with Mlle. Vinteuil. But Albertine was there to comfort me. Afterwards when, by my excessive curiosity as to her actions, I had succeeded in making Albertine leave me, when Françoise informed me that she was no longer in the house and I found myself alone, I had suffered more keenly still. But at least the Albertine whom I had loved remained in my heart. Now, in her place—to punish me for having pushed farther a curiosity to which, contrary to what I had supposed, death had not put an end—what I found was a different girl, heaping up lies and deceits one upon another, in the place where the former had so sweetly reassured me by swearing that she had never tasted those pleasures which, in the intoxication of her recaptured liberty, she had gone down to enjoy to the point of swooning, of biting that young laundress whom she used to meet at sunrise on the bank of the Loire, and to whom she used to say "Oh, it's just heavenly." A different Albertine, not only in the sense in which we understand the word different when it is used of other people. If people are different from what we have supposed, as this difference cannot affect us profoundly, as the pendulum of intuition cannot move outward with a greater oscillation than that of its inward movement, it is only in the superficial regions of the people themselves that we place these differences. Formerly, when I learned that a

woman loved other women, she did not for that reason seem to me a different woman, of a peculiar essence. But when it is a question of a woman with whom we are in love, in order to rid ourself of the grief that we feel at the thought that such a thing is possible, we seek to find out not only what she has done, but what she felt while she was doing it, what idea she had in her mind of the thing that she was doing; then descending and advancing farther and farther, by the profundity of our grief we attain to the mystery, to the essence. I was pained internally, in my body, in my heart—far more than I should have been pained by the fear of losing my life—by this curiosity with which all the force of my intellect and of my subconscious self collaborated; and similarly it was into the core of Albertine's own being that I now projected everything that I learned about her. And the grief that had thus caused to penetrate to so great a depth in my own being the fact of Albertine's vice, was to render me later on a final service. Like the harm that I had done my grandmother, the harm that Albertine had done me was a last bond between her and myself which outlived memory even, for with the conservation of energy which belongs to everything that is physical, suffering has no need of the lessons of memory. Thus a man who has forgotten the charming night spent by moonlight in the woods, suffers still from the rheumatism which he then contracted. Those tastes which she had denied but which were hers, those tastes the discovery of which had come to me not by a cold process of reasoning but in the burning anguish that I had felt on reading the words: "Oh, it's just heavenly," a suffering which gave them a special quality of their

own, those tastes were not merely added to the image of Albertine as is added to the hermit-crab the new shell which it drags after it, but, rather, like a salt which comes in contact with another salt, alters its colour, and, what is more, its nature. When the young laundress must have said to her young friends: "Just fancy, I would never have believed it, well, the young lady is one too!" to me it was not merely a vice hitherto unsuspected by them that they added to Albertine's person, but the discovery that she was another person, a person like themselves, speaking the same language, which, by making her the compatriot of other women, made her even more alien to myself, proved that what I had possessed of her, what I carried in my heart, was only quite a small part of her, and that the rest which was made so extensive by not being merely that thing so mysteriously important, an individual desire, but being shared with others, she had always concealed from me, she had kept me aloof from it, as a woman might have concealed from me that she was a native of an enemy country and a spy; and would indeed have been acting even more treacherously than a spy, for a spy deceives us only as to her nationality, whereas Albertine had deceived me as to her profoundest humanity, the fact that she did not belong to the ordinary human race, but to an alien race which moves among it, conceals itself among it and never blends with it. I had as it happened seen two paintings by Elstir shewing against a leafy background nude women. In one of them, one of the girls is raising her foot as Albertine must have raised hers when she offered it to the laundress. With her other foot she is pushing into the water the other girl, who gaily resists, her hip bent,

her foot barely submerged in the blue water. I remembered now that the raising of the thigh made the same swan's-neck curve with the angle of the knee that was made by the droop of Albertine's thigh when she was lying by my side on the bed, and I had often meant to tell her that she reminded me of those paintings. But I had refrained from doing so, in order not to awaken in her mind the image of nude female bodies. Now I saw her, side by side with the laundress and her friends, recomposing the group which I had so admired when I was seated among Albertine's friends at Balbec. And if I had been an enthusiast sensitive to absolute beauty, I should have recognised that Albertine recomposed it with a thousand times more beauty, now that its elements were the nude statues of goddesses like those which consummate sculptors scattered about the groves of Versailles or plunged in the fountains to be washed and polished by the caresses of their eddies. Now I saw her by the side of the laundress, girls by the water's edge, in their twofold nudity of marble maidens in the midst of a grove of vegetation and dipping into the water like bas-reliefs of Naiads. Remembering how Albertine looked as she lay upon my bed, I thought I could see her bent hip, I saw it, it was a swan's neck, it was seeking the lips of the other girl. Then I beheld no longer a leg, but the bold neck of a swan, like that which in a frenzied sketch seeks the lips of a Leda whom we see in all the palpitation peculiar to feminine pleasure, because there is nothing else but a swan, and she seems more alone, just as we discover upon the telephone the inflexions of a voice which we do not distinguish so long as it is not dissociated from a face in which we materialise

its expression. In this sketch, the pleasure, instead of going to seek the face which inspires it and which is absent, replaced by a motionless swan, is concentrated in her who feels it. At certain moments the communication was cut between my heart and my memory. What Albertine had done with the laundress was indicated to me now only by almost algebraical abbreviations which no longer meant anything to me; but a hundred times in an hour the interrupted current was restored, and my heart was pitilessly scorched by a fire from hell, while I saw Albertine, raised to life by my jealousy, really alive, stiffen beneath the caresses of the young laundress, to whom she was saying: "Oh, it's just heavenly." As she was alive at the moment when she committed her misdeeds, that is to say at the moment at which I myself found myself placed, it was not sufficient to know of the misdeed, I wished her to know that I knew. And so, if at those moments I thought with regret that I should never see her again, this regret bore the stamp of my jealousy, and, very different from the lacerating regret of the moments in which I loved her, was only regret at not being able to say to her: "You thought that I should never know what you did after you left me, well, I know everything, the laundress on the bank of the Loire, you said to her: 'Oh, it's just heavenly,' I have seen the bite." No doubt I said to myself: "Why torment myself? She who took her pleasure with the laundress no longer exists, and consequently was not a person whose actions retain any importance. She is not telling herself that I know. But no more is she telling herself that I do not know, since she tells herself nothing." But this line of reasoning convinced me less than the visual image of her pleas-

ure which brought me back to the moment in which she had tasted it. What we feel is the only thing that exists for us, and we project it into the past, into the future, without letting ourself be stopped by the fictitious barriers of death. If my regret that she was dead was subjected at such moments to the influence of my jealousy and assumed this so peculiar form, that influence extended over my dreams of occultism, of immortality, which were no more than an effort to realise what I desired. And so at those moments if I could have succeeded in evoking her by turning a table as Bergotte had at one time thought possible, or in meeting her in the other life as the abbé X thought, I would have wished to do so only in order to repeat to her: "I know about the laundress. You said to her: 'Oh, it's just heavenly,' I have seen the bite." What came to my rescue against this image of the laundress, was—certainly when it had endured for any while—the image itself, because we really know only what is novel, what suddenly introduces into our sensibility a change of tone which strikes us, the things for which habit has not yet substituted its colourless facsimiles. But it was, above all, this subdivision of Albertine in many fragments, in many Albertines, which was her sole mode of existence in me. Moments recurred in which she had merely been good, or intelligent, or serious, or even addicted to nothing but sport. And this subdivision, was it not after all proper that it should soothe me? For if it was not in itself anything real, if it depended upon the successive form of the hours in which it had appeared to me, a form which remained that of my memory as the curve of the projections of my magic lantern depended upon the curve of the coloured slides,

did it not represent in its own manner a truth, a thoroughly objective truth too, to wit that each one of us is not a single person, but contains many persons who have not all the same moral value and that if a vicious Albertine had existed, it did not mean that there had not been others, she who enjoyed talking to me about Saint-Simon in her room, she who on the night when I had told her that we must part had said so sadly: "That pianola, this room, to think that I shall never see any of these things again" and, when she saw the emotion which my lie had finally communicated to myself, had exclaimed with a sincere pity: "Oh, no, anything rather than make you unhappy, I promise that I will never try to see you again." Then I was no longer alone. I felt the wall that separated us vanish. At the moment in which the good Albertine had returned, I had found again the one person from whom I could demand the antidote to the sufferings which Albertine was causing me. True, I still wanted to speak to her about the story of the laundress, but it was no longer by way of a cruel triumph, and to shew her maliciously how much I knew. As I should have done had Albertine been alive, I asked her tenderly whether the tale about the laundress was true. She swore to me that it was not, that Aimé was not truthful and that, wishing to appear to have earned the money which I had given him, he had not liked to return with nothing to shew, and had made the laundress tell him what he wished to hear. No doubt Albertine had been lying to me throughout. And yet in the flux and reflux of her contradictions, I felt that there had been a certain progression due to myself. That she had not indeed made me, at the outset, admissions (perhaps, it

is true, involuntary in a phrase that escaped her lips) I would not have sworn. I no longer remembered. And besides she had such odd ways of naming certain things, that they might be interpreted in one sense or the other, but the feeling that she had had of my jealousy had led her afterwards to retract with horror what at first she had complacently admitted. Anyhow, Albertine had no need to tell me this. To be convinced of her innocence it was enough for me to embrace her, and I could do so now that the wall was down which parted us, like that impalpable and resisting wall which after a quarrel rises between two lovers and against which kisses would be shattered. No, she had no need to tell me anything. Whatever she might have done, whatever she might have wished to do, the poor child, there were sentiments in which, over the barrier that divided us, we could be united. If the story was true, and if Albertine had concealed her tastes from me, it was in order not to make me unhappy. I had the pleasure of hearing this Albertine say so. Besides, had I ever known any other? The two chief causes of error in our relations with another person are, having ourself a good heart, or else being in love with the other person. We fall in love for a smile, a glance, a bare shoulder. That is enough; then, in the long hours of hope or sorrow, we fabricate a person, we compose a character. And when later on we see much of the beloved person, we can no longer, whatever the cruel reality that confronts us, strip off that good character, that nature of a woman who loves us, from the person who bestows that glance, bares that shoulder, than we can when she has grown old eliminate her youthful face from a person whom we have known

since her girlhood. I called to mind the noble glance, kind and compassionate, of that Albertine, her plump cheeks, the coarse grain of her throat. It was the image of a dead woman, but, as this dead woman was alive, it was easy for me to do immediately what I should inevitably have done if she had been by my side in her living body (what I should do were I ever to meet her again in another life), I forgave her.

The moments which I had spent with this Albertine were so precious to me that I would not have let any of them escape me. Now, at times, as we recover the remnants of a squandered fortune, I recaptured some of these which I had thought to be lost; as I tied a scarf behind my neck instead of in front, I remembered a drive of which I had never thought again, before which, in order that the cold air might not reach my throat, Albertine had arranged my scarf for me in this way after first kissing me. This simple drive, restored to my memory by so humble a gesture, gave me the same pleasure as the intimate objects once the property of a dead woman who was dear to us which her old servant brings to us and which are so precious to us; my grief found itself enriched by it, all the more so as I had never given another thought to the scarf in question.

And now Albertine, liberated once more, had resumed her flight; men, women followed her. She was alive in me. I became aware that this prolonged adoration of Albertine was like the ghost of the sentiment that I had felt for her, reproduced its various elements and obeyed the same laws as the sentimental reality which it reflected on the farther side of death. For I felt quite sure that if I could place some interval between my thoughts of

Albertine, or if, on the other hand, I had allowed too long an interval to elapse, I should cease to love her; a clean cut would have made me unconcerned about her, as I was now about my grandmother. A period of any length spent without thinking of her would have broken in my memory the continuity which is the very principle of life, which however may be resumed after a certain interval of time. Had not this been the case with my love for Albertine when she was alive, a love which had been able to revive after a quite long interval during which I had never given her a thought? Well, my memory must have been obedient to the same laws, have been unable to endure longer intervals, for all that it did was, like an aurora borealis, to reflect after Albertine's death the sentiment that I had felt for her, it was like the phantom of my love.

At other times my grief assumed so many forms that occasionally I no longer recognised it; I longed to be loved in earnest, decided to seek for a person who would live with me; this seemed to me to be the sign that I no longer loved Albertine, whereas it meant that I loved her still; for the need to be loved in earnest was, just as much as the desire to kiss Albertine's plump cheeks, merely a part of my regret. It was when I had forgotten her that I might feel it to be wiser, happier to live without love. And so my regret for Albertine, because it was it that aroused in me the need of a sister, made that need insatiable. And in proportion as my regret for Albertine grew fainter, the need of a sister, which was only an unconscious form of that regret, would become less imperious. And yet these two residues of my love did not proceed to shrink at an equal rate. There were hours

in which I had made up my mind to marry, so completely had the former been eclipsed, the latter on the contrary retaining its full strength. And then, later on, my jealous memories having died away, suddenly at times a feeling welled up into my heart of affection for Albertine, and then, thinking of my own love affairs with other women, I told myself that she would have understood, would have shared them—and her vice became almost a reason for loving her. At times my jealousy revived in moments when I no longer remembered Albertine, albeit it was of her that I was jealous. I thought that I was jealous of Andrée, of one of whose recent adventures I had just been informed. But Andrée was to me merely a substitute, a bypath, a conduit which brought me indirectly to Albertine. So it is that in our dreams we give a different face, a different name to a person as to whose underlying identity we are not mistaken. When all was said, notwithstanding the flux and reflux which upset in these particular instances the general law, the sentiments that Albertine had left with me were more difficult to extinguish than the memory of their original cause. Not only the sentiments, but the sensations. Different in this respect from Swann who, when he had begun to cease to love Odette, had not even been able to recreate in himself the sensation of his love, I felt myself still reliving a past which was no longer anything more than the history of another person; my ego in a sense cloven in twain, while its upper extremity was already hard and frigid, burned still at its base whenever a spark made the old current pass through it, even after my mind had long ceased to conceive Albertine. And as no image of her accompanied the cruel palpitations, the tears that were

brought to my eyes by a cold wind blowing as at Balbec upon the apple trees that were already pink with blossom, I was led to ask myself whether the renewal of my grief was not due to entirely pathological causes and whether what I took to be the revival of a memory and the final period of a state of love was not rather the first stage of heart-disease.

There are in certain affections secondary accidents which the sufferer is too apt to confuse with the malady itself. When they cease, he is surprised to find himself nearer to recovery than he has supposed. Of this sort had been the suffering caused me—the complication brought about—by Aimé's letters with regard to the bathing establishment and the young laundress. But a healer of broken hearts, had such a person visited me, would have found that, in other respects, my grief itself was on the way to recovery. No doubt in myself, since I was a man, one of those amphibious creatures who are plunged simultaneously in the past and in the reality of the moment, there still existed a contradiction between the living memory of Albertine and my consciousness of her death. But this contradiction was so to speak the opposite of what it had been before. The idea that Albertine was dead, this idea which at first used to contest so furiously with the idea that she was alive that I was obliged to run away from it as children run away from a breaking wave, this idea of her death, by the very force of its incessant onslaught, had ended by capturing the place in my mind that, a short while ago, was still occupied by the idea of her life. Without my being precisely aware of it, it was now this idea of Albertine's death—no longer the present memory of her life—that formed the

chief subject of my unconscious musings, with the result that if I interrupted them suddenly to reflect upon myself, what surprised me was not, as in earlier days, that Albertine so living in myself could be no longer existent upon the earth, could be dead, but that Albertine, who no longer existed upon the earth, who was dead, should have remained so living in myself. Built up by the contiguity of the memories that followed one another, the black tunnel, in which my thoughts had been straying so long that they had even ceased to be aware of it, was suddenly broken by an interval of sunlight, allowing me to see in the distance a blue and smiling universe in which Albertine was no more than a memory, unimportant and full of charm. Is it this, I asked myself, that is the true Albertine, or is it indeed the person who, in the darkness through which I have so long been rolling, seemed to me the sole reality? The person that I had been so short a time ago, who lived only in the perpetual expectation of the moment when Albertine would come in to bid him good night and to kiss him, a sort of multiplication of myself made this person appear to me as no longer anything more than a feeble part, already half-detached from myself, and like a fading flower I felt the rejuvenating refreshment of an exfoliation. However, these brief illuminations succeeded perhaps only in making me more conscious of my love for Albertine, as happens with every idea that is too constant and has need of opposition to make it affirm itself. People who were alive during the war of 1870, for instance, say that the idea of war ended by seeming to them natural, not because they were not thinking sufficiently of the war, but because they could think of nothing else. And in order

to understand how strange and important a fact war is, it was necessary that, some other thing tearing them from their permanent obsession, they should forget for a moment that war was being waged, should find themselves once again as they had been in a state of peace, until all of a sudden upon the momentary blank there stood out at length distinct the monstrous reality which they had long ceased to see, since there had been nothing else visible.

If, again, this withdrawal of my different impressions of Albertine had at least been carried out not in echelon but simultaneously, equally, by a general retirement, along the whole line of my memory, my impressions of her infidelities retiring at the same time as those of her kindness, oblivion would have brought me solace. It was not so. As upon a beach where the tide recedes unevenly, I would be assailed by the rush of one of my suspicions when the image of her tender presence had already withdrawn too far from me to be able to bring me its remedy. As for the infidelities, they had made me suffer, because, however remote the year in which they had occured, to me they were not remote; but I suffered from them less when they became remote, that is to say when I pictured them to myself less vividly, for the remoteness of a thing is in proportion rather to the visual power of the memory that is looking at it than to the real interval of the intervening days, like the memory of last night's dream which may seem to us more distant in its vagueness and obliteration than an event which is many years old. But albeit the idea of Albertine's death made headway in me, the reflux of the sensation that she was alive, if it did not arrest that pro-

gress, obstructed it nevertheless and prevented its being regular. And I realise now that during this period (doubtless because of my having forgotten the hours in which she had been cloistered in my house, hours which, by dint of relieving me from any pain at misdeeds which seemed to me almost unimportant because I knew that she was not committing them, had become almost tantamount to so many proofs of her innocence), I underwent the martyrdom of living in the constant company of an idea quite as novel as the idea that Albertine was dead (previously I had always started from the idea that she was alive), with an idea which I should have supposed it to be equally impossible to endure and which, without my noticing it, was gradually forming the basis of my consciousness, was substituting itself for the idea that Albertine was innocent: the idea that she was guilty. When I believed that I was doubting her, I was on the contrary believing in her; similarly I took as the starting point of my other ideas the certainty—often proved false as the contrary idea had been—the certainty of her guilt, while I continued to imagine that I still felt doubts. I must have suffered intensely during this period, but I realise that it was inevitable. We are healed of a suffering only by experiencing it to the full. By protecting Albertine from any contact with the outer world, by forging the illusion that she was innocent, just as later on when I adopted as the basis of my reasoning the thought that she was alive, I was merely postponing the hour of my recovery, because I was postponing the long hours that must elapse as a preliminary to the end of the necessary sufferings. Now with regard to these ideas of Albertine's guilt, habit,

were it to come into play, would do so according to the same laws that I had already experienced in the course of my life. Just as the name Guermantes had lost the significance and the charm of a road bordered with flowers in purple and ruddy clusters and of the window of Gilbert the Bad, Albertine's presence, that of the blue undulations of the sea, the names of Swann, of the lift boy, of the Princesse de Guermantes and ever so many others had lost all that they had signified for me—that charm and that significance leaving in me a mere word which they considered important enough to live by itself, as a man who has come to set a subordinate to work gives him his instructions and after a few weeks withdraws—similarly the painful knowledge of Albertine's guilt would be expelled from me by habit. Moreover, between now and then, as in the course of an attack launched from both flanks at once, in this action by habit two allies would mutually lend a hand. It was because this idea of Albertine's guilt would become for me an idea more probable, more habitual, that it would become less painful. But on the other hand, because it would be less painful, the objections raised to my certainty of her guilt, which were inspired in my mind only by my desire not to suffer too acutely, would collapse one by one, and as each action precipitates the next, I should pass quickly enough from the certainty of Albertine's innocence to the certainty of her guilt. It was essential that I should live with the idea of Albertine's death, with the idea of her misdeeds, in order that these ideas might become habitual, that is to say that I might be able to forget these ideas and in the end to forget Albertine herself.

I had not yet reached this stage. At one time it was my memory made more clear by some intellectual excitement—such as reading a book—which revived my grief, at other times it was on the contrary my grief—when it was aroused, for instance, by the anguish of a spell of stormy weather—which raised higher, brought nearer to the light, some memory of our love.

Moreover these revivals of my love for Albertine might occur after an interval of indifference interspersed with other curiosities, as after the long interval that had dated from her refusal to let me kiss her at Balbec, during which I had thought far more about Mme. de Guermantes, about Andrée, about Mlle. de Stermaria; it had revived when I had begun again to see her frequently. But even now various preoccupations were able to bring about a separation—from a dead woman, this time—in which she left me more indifferent. And even later on when I loved her less, this remained nevertheless for me one of those desires of which we soon grow tired, but which resume their hold when we have allowed them to lie quiet for some time. I pursued one living woman, then another, then I returned to my dead. Often it was in the most obscure recesses of myself, when I could no longer form any clear idea of Albertine, that a name came by chance to stimulate painful reactions, which I supposed to be no longer possible, like those dying people whose brain is no longer capable of thought and who are made to contract their muscles by the prick of a needle. And, during long periods, these stimulations occurred to me so rarely that I was driven to seek for myself the occasions of a grief, of a crisis of jealousy, in an attempt to reattach myself to the past, to remember

her better. Since regret for a woman is only a recrudescence of love and remains subject to the same laws, the keenness of my regret was enhanced by the same causes which in Albertine's lifetime had increased my love for her and in the front rank of which had always appeared jealousy and grief. But as a rule these occasions—for an illness, a war, can always last far longer than the most prophetic wisdom has calculated—took me unawares and caused me such violent shocks that I thought far more of protecting myself against suffering than of appealing to them for a memory.

Moreover a word did not even need to be connected, like "Chaumont," with some suspicion (even a syllable common to different names was sufficient for my memory —as for an electrician who is prepared to use any substance that is a good conductor—to restore the contact between Albertine and my heart) in order to reawaken that suspicion, to be the password, the triumphant "Open, Sesame" unlocking the door of a past which one had ceased to take into account, because, having seen more than enough of it, strictly speaking one no longer possessed it; one had been shorn of it, had supposed that by this subtraction one's own personality had changed its form, like a geometrical figure which by the removal of an angle would lose one of its sides; certain phrases for instance in which there occurred the name of a street, of a road, where Albertine might have been, were sufficient to incarnate a potential, non-existent jealousy, in the quest of a body, a dwelling, some material location, some particular realisation. Often it was simply during my sleep that these "repetitions," these "da capo" of our dreams which turn back in an instant many pages

of our memory, many leaves of the calendar, brought me back, made me return to a painful but remote impression which had long since yielded its place to others but which now became present once more. As a rule, it was accompanied by a whole stage-setting, clumsy but appealing, which, giving me the illusion of reality, brought before my eyes, sounded in my ears what thenceforward dated from that night. Besides, in the history of a love-affair and of its struggles against oblivion, do not our dreams occupy an even larger place than our waking state, our dreams which take no account of the infinitesimal divisions of time, suppress transitions, oppose sharp contrasts, undo in an instant the web of consolation so slowly woven during the day, and contrive for us, by night, a meeting with her whom we would eventually have forgotten, provided always that we did not see her again. For whatever anyone may say, we can perfectly well have in a dream the impression that what is happening is real. This could be impossible only for reasons drawn from our experience which at that moment is hidden from us. With the result that this improbable life seems to us true. Sometimes, by a defect in the internal lighting which spoiled the success of the play, the appearance of my memories on the stage giving me the illusion of real life, I really believed that I had arranged to meet Albertine, that I was seeing her again, but then I found myself incapable of advancing to meet her, of uttering the words which I meant to say to her, to rekindle in order to see her the torch that had been quenched, impossibilities which were simply in my dream the immobility, the dumbness, the blindness of the sleeper —as suddenly one sees in the faulty projection of a

magic lantern a huge shadow, which ought not to be visible, obliterate the figures on the slide, which is the shadow of the lantern itself, or that of the operator. At other times Albertine appeared in my dream, and proposed to leave me once again, without my being moved by her determination. This was because from my memory there had been able to filter into the darkness of my dream a warning ray of light which, lodged in Albertine, deprived her future actions, the departure of which she informed me, of any importance, this was the knowledge that she was dead. Often this memory that Albertine was dead was combined, without destroying it, with the sensation that she was alive. I conversed with her; while I was speaking, my grandmother came and went at the other end of the room. Part of her chin had crumbled away like a corroded marble, but I found nothing unusual in that. I told Albertine that I had various questions to ask her with regard to the bathing establishment at Balbec and to a certain laundress in Touraine, but I postponed them to another occasion since we had plenty of time and there was no longer any urgency. She assured me that she was not doing anything wrong and that she had merely, the day before, kissed Mlle. Vinteuil on the lips. "What? Is she here?" "Yes, in fact it is time for me to leave you, for I have to go and see her presently." And since, now that Albertine was dead, I no longer kept her a prisoner in my house as in the last months of her life, her visit to Mlle. Vinteuil disturbed me. I sought to prevent Albertine from seeing her. Albertine told me that she had done no more than kiss her, but she was evidently beginning to lie again as in the days when she used to deny every-

thing. Presently she would not be content, probably, with kissing Mlle. Vinteuil. No doubt from a certain point of view I was wrong to let myself be disturbed like this, since, according to what we are told, the dead can feel, can do nothing. People say so, but this did not explain the fact that my grandmother, who was dead, had continued nevertheless to live for many years, and at that moment was passing to and fro in my room. And no doubt, once I was awake, this idea of a dead woman who continued to live ought to have become as impossible for me to understand as it is to explain. But I had already formed it so many times in the course of those transient periods of insanity which are our dreams, that I had become in time familiar with it; our memory of dreams may become lasting, if they repeat themselves sufficiently often. And long after my dream had ended, I remained tormented by that kiss which Albertine had told me that she had bestowed in words which I thought that I could still hear. And indeed, they must have passed very close to my ear since it was I myself that had uttered them.

All day long, I continued to converse with Albertine, I questioned her, I forgave her, I made up for my forgetfulness of the things which I had always meant to say to her during her life. And all of a sudden I was startled by the thought that to the creature invoked by memory to whom all these remarks were addressed, no reality any longer corresponded, that death had destroyed the various parts of the face to which the continual urge of the will to live, now abolished, had alone given the unity of a person. At other times, without my having dreamed, as soon as I awoke, I felt that the wind had

changed in me; it was blowing coldly and steadily from another direction, issuing from the remotest past, bringing back to me the sound of a clock striking far-off hours, of the whistle of departing trains which I did not ordinarily hear. One day I tried to interest myself in a book, a novel by Bergotte, of which I had been especially fond. Its congenial characters appealed to me strongly, and very soon, reconquered by the charm of the book, I began to hope, as for a personal pleasure, that the wicked woman might be punished; my eyes grew moist when the happiness of the young lovers was assured. "But then," I exclaimed in despair," from my attaching so much importance to what Albertine may have done, I must conclude that her personality is something real which cannot be destroyed, that I shall find her one day in her own likeness in heaven, if I invoke with so many prayers, await with such impatience, learn with such floods of tears the success of a person who has never existed save in Bergotte's imagination, whom I have never seen, whose appearance I am at liberty to imagine as I please!" Besides, in this novel, there were seductive girls, amorous correspondences, deserted paths in which lovers meet, this reminded me that one may love clandestinely, it revived my jealousy, as though Albertine had still been able to stroll along deserted paths. And there was also the incident of a man who meets after fifty years a woman whom he loved in her youth, does not recognise her, is bored in her company. And this reminded me that love does not last for ever and crushed me as though I were destined to be parted from Albertine and to meet her again with indifference in my old age. If I caught sight of a map of France, my timorous eyes

took care not to come upon Touraine so that I might not be jealous, nor, so that I might not be miserable, upon Normandy where the map marked at least Balbec and Doncières, between which I placed all those roads that we had traversed so many times together. In the midst of other names of towns or villages of France, names which were merely visible or audible, the name of Tours for instance seemed to be differently composed, no longer of immaterial images, but of venomous substances which acted in an immediate fashion upon my heart whose beatings they quickened and made painful. And if this force extended to certain names, which it had made so different from the rest, how when I remained more shut up in myself, when I confined myself to Albertine herself, could I be astonished that, emanating from a girl who was probably just like any other girl, this force which I found irresistible, and to produce which any other woman might have served, had been the result of a confusion and of the bringing in contact of dreams, desires, habits, affections, with the requisite interference of alternate pains and pleasures? And this continued after her death, memory being sufficient to carry on the real life, which is mental. I recalled Albertine alighting from a railway-carriage and telling me that she wanted to go to Saint-Mars le Vêtu, and I saw her again also with her "polo" pulled down over her cheeks, I found once more possibilities of pleasure, towards which I sprang saying to myself: "We might have gone on together to Incarville, to Doncières." There was no watering-place in the neighbourhood of Balbec in which I did not see her, with the result that that country, like a mythological land which had been preserved, restored to me, living and

cruel, the most ancient, the most charming legends, those that had been most obliterated by the sequel of my love. Oh! what anguish were I ever to have to lie down again upon that bed at Balbec around whose brass frame, as around an immovable pivot, a fixed bar, my life had moved, had evolved, bringing successively into its compass gay conversations with my grandmother, the nightmare of her death, Albertine's soothing caresses, the discovery of her vice, and now a new life in which, looking at the glazed bookcases upon which the sea was reflected, I knew that Albertine would never come into the room again! Was it not, that Balbec hotel, like the sole indoor set of a provincial theatre, in which for years past the most diverse plays have been performed, which has served for a comedy, for one tragedy, for another, for a purely poetical drama, that hotel which already receded quite far into my past? The fact that this part alone remained always the same, with its walls, its bookcases, its glass panes, through the course of fresh epochs in my life, made me more conscious that, in the total, it was the rest, it was myself that had changed, and gave me thus that impression that the mysteries of life, of love, of death, in which children imagine in their optimism that they have no share, are not set apart, but that we perceive with a dolorous pride that they have embodied themselves in the course of years in our own life.

I tried at times to take an interest in the newspapers. But I found the act of reading them repellent, and moreover it was not without danger to myself. The fact is that from each of our ideas, as from a clearing in a forest, so many roads branch in different directions that at the moment when I least expected it I found myself faced

by a fresh memory. The title of Fauré's melody *le Secret* had led me to the Duc de Broglie's *Secret du Roi,* the name Broglie to that of Chaumont, or else the words "Good Friday" had made me think of Golgotha, Golgotha of the etymology of the word which is, it seems, the equivalent of *Calvus Mons,* Chaumont. But, whatever the path by which I might have arrived at Chaumont, at that moment I received so violent a shock that I could think only of how to guard myself against pain. Some moments after the shock, my intelligence, which like the sound of thunder travels less rapidly, taught me the reason. Chaumont had made me think of the Buttes-Chaumont to which Mme. Bontemps had told me that Andrée used often to go with Albertine, whereas Albertine had told me that she had never seen the Buttes-Chaumont. After a certain age our memories are so intertwined with one another that the thing of which we are thinking, the book that we are reading are of scarcely any importance. We have put something of ourself everywhere, everything is fertile, everything is dangerous, and we can make discoveries no less precious than in Pascal's Pensées in an advertisement of soap.

No doubt an incident such as this of the Buttes-Chaumont which at the time had appeared to me futile was in itself far less serious, far less decisive evidence against Albertine than the story of the bath-woman or the laundress. But, for one thing, a memory which comes to us by chance finds in us an intact capacity for imagining, that is to say in this case for suffering, which we have partly exhausted when it is on the contrary ourself that have deliberately applied our mind to recreating a memory. And to these latter memories (those that concerned

the bath-woman and the laundress) ever present albeit obscured in my consciousness, like the furniture placed in the semi-darkness of a gallery which, without being able to see them, we avoid as we pass, I had grown accustomed. It was, on the contrary, a long time since I had given a thought to the Buttes-Chaumont, or, to take another instance, to Albertine's scrutiny of the mirror in the casino at Balbec, or to her unexplained delay on the evening when I had waited so long for her after the Guermantes party, to any of those parts of her life which remained outside my heart and which I would have liked to know in order that they might become assimilated, annexed to it, become joined with the more pleasant memories which formed in it an Albertine internal and genuinely possessed. When I raised a corner of the heavy curtain of habit (the stupefying habit which during the whole course of our life conceals from us almost the whole universe, and in the dead of night, without changing the label, substitutes for the most dangerous or intoxicating poisons of life some kind of anodyne which does not procure any delight), such a memory would come back to me as on the day of the incident itself with that fresh and piercing novelty of a recurring season, of a change in the routine of our hours, which, in the realm of pleasures also, if we get into a carriage on the first fine day in spring, or leave the house at sunrise, makes us observe our own insignificant actions with a lucid exaltation which makes that intense minute worth more than the sum-total of the preceding days. I found myself once more coming away from the party at the Princesse de Guermantes' and awaiting the coming of Albertine. Days in the past cover up little by little those that

preceded them and are themselves buried beneath those that follow them. But each past day has remained deposited in us, as, in a vast library in which there are older books, a volume which, doubtless, nobody will ever ask to see. And yet should this day from the past, traversing the lucidity of the subsequent epochs, rise to the surface and spread itself over us whom it entirely covers, then for a moment the names resume their former meaning, people their former aspect, we ourself our state of mind at the time, and we feel, with a vague suffering which however is endurable and will not last for long, the problems which have long ago become insoluble and which caused us such anguish at the time. Our ego is composed of the superimposition of our successive states. But this superimposition is not unalterable like the stratification of a mountain. Incessant upheavals raise to the surface ancient deposits. I found myself as I had been after the party at the Princesse de Guermantes's, awaiting the coming of Albertine. What had she been doing that evening? Had she been unfaithful to me? With whom? Aimé's revelations, even if I accepted them, in no way diminished for me the anxious, despairing interest of this unexpected question, as though each different Albertine, each fresh memory, set a special problem of jealousy, to which the solutions of the other problems could not apply. But I would have liked to know not only with what woman she had spent that evening, but what special pleasure the action represented to her, what was occurring in that moment in herself. Sometimes, at Balbec, Françoise had gone to fetch her, had told me that she had found her leaning out of her window, with an uneasy, questing air, as though she were expecting somebody. Supposing

that I learned that the girl whom she was awaiting was Andrée, what was the state of mind in which Albertine awaited her, that state of mind concealed behind the uneasy, questing gaze? That tendency, what importance did it have for Albertine? How large a place did it occupy in her thoughts? Alas, when I recalled my own agitation, whenever I had caught sight of a girl who attracted me, sometimes when I had merely heard her mentioned without having seen her, my anxiety to look my best, to enjoy every advantage, my cold sweats, I had only, in order to torture myself, to imagine the same voluptuous emotion in Albertine. And already it was sufficient to torture me, if I said to myself that, compared with this other thing, her serious conversations with me about Stendhal and Victor Hugo must have had very little weight with her, if I felt her heart attracted towards other people, detach itself from mine, incarnate itself elsewhere. But even the importance which this desire must have had for her and the reserve with which she surrounded it could not reveal to me what, qualitatively, it had been, still less how she qualified it when she spoke of it to herself. In bodily suffering, at least we do not have ourself to choose our pain. The malady decides it and imposes it on us. But in jealousy we have to some extent to make trial of sufferings of every sort and degree, before we arrive at the one which seems appropriate. And what could be more difficult, when it is a question of a suffering such as that of feeling that she whom we loved is finding pleasure with persons different from ourself who give her sensations which we are not capable of giving her, or who at least by their configuration, their aspect, their ways, represent to her

anything but ourself. Ah! if only Albertine had fallen in love with Saint-Loup! How much less, it seemed to me, I should have suffered! It is true that we are unaware of the peculiar sensibility of each of our fellow-creatures, but as a rule we do not even know that we are unaware of it, for this sensibility of other people leaves us cold. So far as Albertine was concerned, my misery or happiness would have depended upon the nature of this sensibility; I knew well enough that it was unknown to me, and the fact that it was unknown to me was already a grief. The unknown desires and pleasures that Albertine felt, once I was under the illusion that I beheld them, when, some time after Albertine's death, Andrée came to see me.

For the first time she seemed to me beautiful, I said to myself that her almost woolly hair, her dark, shadowed eyes, were doubtless what Albertine had so dearly loved, the materialisation before my eyes of what she used to take with her in her amorous dreams, of what she beheld with the prophetic eyes of desire on the day when she had so suddenly decided to leave Balbec.

Like a strange, dark flower that was brought to me from beyond the grave, from the innermost being of a person in whom I had been unable to discover it, I seemed to see before me, the unlooked-for exhumation of a priceless relic, the incarnate desire of Albertine which Andrée was to me, as Venus was the desire of Jove. Andrée regretted Albertine, but I felt at once that she did not miss her. Forcibly removed from her friend by death, she seemed to have easily taken her part in a final separation which I would not have dared to ask of her while Albertine was alive, so afraid would I have been of not

succeeding in obtaining Andrée's consent. She seemed on the contrary to accept without difficulty this renunciation, but precisely at the moment when it could no longer be of any advantage to me. Andrée abandoned Albertine to me, but dead, and when she had lost for me not only her life but retrospectively a little of her reality, since I saw that she was not indispensable, unique to Andrée who had been able to replace her with other girls.

While Albertine was alive, I would not have dared to ask Andrée to take me into her confidence as to the nature of their friendship both mutually and with Mlle. Vinteuil's friend, since I was never absolutely certain that Andrée did not repeat to Albertine everything that I said to her. But now such an inquiry, even if it must prove fruitless, would at least be unattended by danger. I spoke to Andrée not in a questioning tone but as though I had known all the time, perhaps from Albertine, of the fondness that Andrée herself had for women and of her own relations with Mlle. Vinteuil's friend. She admitted everything without the slightest reluctance, smiling as she spoke. From this avowal, I might derive the most painful consequences; first of all because Andrée, so affectionate and coquettish with many of the young men at Balbec, would never have been suspected by anyone of practices which she made no attempt to deny, so that by analogy, when I discovered this novel Andrée, I might think that Albertine would have confessed them with the same ease to anyone other than myself whom she felt to be jealous. But on the other hand, Andrée having been Albertine's dearest friend, and the friend for whose sake she had probably returned in haste from Balbec,

now that Andrée was proved to have these tastes, the conclusion that was forced upon my mind was that Albertine and Andrée had always indulged them together. Certainly, just as in a stranger's presence, we do not always dare to examine the gift that he has brought us, the wrapper of which we shall not unfasten until the donor has gone, so long as Andrée was with me I did not retire into myself to examine the grief that she had brought me, which, I could feel, was already causing my bodily servants, my nerves, my heart, a keen disturbance which, out of good breeding, I pretended not to notice, speaking on the contrary with the utmost affability to the girl who was my guest without diverting my gaze to these internal incidents. It was especially painful to me to hear Andrée say, speaking of Albertine: "Oh yes, she always loved going to the Chevreuse valley." To the vague and non-existent universe in which Albertine's excursions with Andrée occurred, it seemed to me that the latter had, by a posterior and diabolical creation, added an accursed valley. I felt that Andrée was going to tell me everything that she was in the habit of doing with Albertine, and, while I endeavoured from politeness, from force of habit, from self-esteem, perhaps from gratitude, to appear more and more affectionate, while the space that I had still been able to concede to Albertine's innocence became smaller and smaller, I seemed to perceive that, despite my efforts, I presented the paralysed aspect of an animal round which a steadily narrowing circle is slowly traced by the hypnotising bird of prey which makes no haste because it is sure of reaching when it chooses the victim that can no longer escape. I gazed at her nevertheless, and, with such liveliness, naturalness

and assurance as a person can muster who is trying to make it appear that he is not afraid of being hypnotised by the other's stare, I said casually to Andrée: "I have never mentioned the subject to you for fear of offending you, but now that we both find a pleasure in talking about her, I may as well tell you that I found out long ago all about the things of that sort that you used to do with Albertine. And I can tell you something that you will be glad to hear although you know it already: Albertine adored you." I told Andrée that it would be of great interest to me if she would allow me to see her, even if she simply confined herself to caresses which would not embarrass her unduly in my presence, performing such actions with those of Albertine's friends who shared her tastes, and I mentioned Rosemonde, Berthe, each of Albertine's friends, in the hope of finding out something. "Apart from the fact that not for anything in the world would I do the things you mention in your presence," Andrée replied, "I do not believe that any of the girls whom you have named have those tastes." Drawing closer in spite of myself to the monster that was attracting me, I answered: "What! You are not going to expect me to believe that, of all your band, Albertine was the only one with whom you did that sort of thing!" "But I have never done anything of the sort with Albertine." "Come now, my dear Andrée, why deny things which I have known for at least three years, I see no harm in them, far from it. Talking of such things, that evening when she was so anxious to go with you the next day to Mme. Verdurin's, you may remember perhaps. . . ." Before I had completed my sentence, I saw in Andrée's eyes, which it sharpened to a pin-point like those stones

which for that reason jewellers find it difficult to use, a fleeting, worried stare, like the heads of persons privileged to go behind the scenes who draw back the edge of the curtain before the play has begun and at once retire in order not to be seen. This uneasy stare vanished, everything had become quite normal, but I felt that anything which I might see hereafter would have been specially arranged for my benefit. At that moment I caught sight of myself in the mirror; I was struck by a certain resemblance between myself and Andrée. If I had not long since ceased to shave my upper lip and had had but the faintest shadow of a moustache, this resemblance would have been almost complete. It was perhaps when she saw, at Balbec, my moustache which had scarcely begun to grow, that Albertine had suddenly felt that impatient, furious desire to return to Paris. "But I cannot, all the same, say things that are not true, for the simple reason that you see no harm in them. I swear to you that I never did anything with Albertine, and I am convinced that she detested that sort of thing. The people who told you were lying to you, probably with some ulterior motive," she said with a questioning, defiant air. "Oh, very well then, since you won't tell me," I replied. I preferred to appear to be unwilling to furnish a proof which I did not possess. And yet I uttered vaguely and at random the name of the Buttes-Chaumont. "I may have gone to the Buttes-Chaumont with Albertine, but is it a place that has a particularly evil reputation?" I asked her whether she could not mention the subject to Gisèle who had at one time been on intimate terms with Albertine. But Andrée assured me that after the outrageous way in which Gisèle had behaved to her recently,

asking a favour of her was the one thing that she must absolutely decline to do for me. "If you see her," she went on, "do not tell her what I have said to you about her, there is no use in making an enemy of her. She knows what I think of her, but I have always preferred to avoid having violent quarrels with her which only have to be patched up afterwards. And besides, she is a dangerous person. But you can understand that when one has read the letter which I had in my hands a week ago, and in which she lied with such absolute treachery, nothing, not even the noblest actions in the world, can wipe out the memory of such a thing." In short, if, albeit Andrée had those tastes to such an extent that she made no pretence of concealing them, and Albertine had felt for her that strong affection which she had undoubtedly felt, notwithstanding this Andrée had never had any carnal relations with Albertine and had never been aware that Albertine had those tastes, this meant that Albertine did not have them, and had never enjoyed with anyone those relations which, rather than with anyone else, she would have enjoyed with Andrée. And so when Andrée had left me, I realised that so definite a statement had brought me peace of mind. But perhaps it had been dictated by a sense of the obligation, which Andrée felt that she owed to the dead girl whose memory still survived in her, not to let me believe what Albertine had doubtless, while she was alive, begged her to deny.

Novelists sometimes pretend in an introduction that while travelling in a foreign country they have met somebody who has told them the story of a person's life. They then withdraw in favour of this casual acquaintance, and the story that he tells them is nothing more or less than

their novel. Thus the life of Fabrice del Dongo was related to Stendhal by a Canon of Padua. How gladly would we, when we are in love, that is to say when another person's existence seems to us mysterious, find some such well-informed narrator! And undoubtedly he exists. Do we not ourself frequently relate, without any trace of passion, the story of some woman or other, to one of our friends, or to a stranger, who has known nothing of her love-affairs and listens to us with keen interest? The person that I was when I spoke to Bloch of the Duchesse de Guermantes, of Mme. Swann, that person still existed, who could have spoken to me of Albertine, that person exists always . . . but we never come across him. It seemed to me that, if I had been able to find women who had known her, I should have learned everything of which I was unaware. And yet to strangers it must have seemed that nobody could have known so much of her life as myself. Did I even know her dearest friend, Andrée? Thus it is that we suppose that the friend of a Minister must know the truth about some political affair or cannot be implicated in a scandal. Having tried and failed, the friend has found that whenever he discussed politics with the Minister the latter confined himself to generalisations and told him nothing more than what had already appeared in the newspapers, or that if he was in any trouble, his repeated attempts to secure the Minister's help have ended invariably in an: "It is not in my power" against which the friend is himself powerless. I said to myself: "If I could have known such and such witnesses!" from whom, if I had known them, I should probably have been unable to extract anything more than from Andrée, herself the cus-

todian of a secret which she refused to surrender. Differing in this respect also from Swann who, when he was no longer jealous, ceased to feel any curiosity as to what Odette might have done with Forcheville, even after my jealousy had subsided, the thought of making the acquaintance of Albertine's laundress, of the people in her neighbourhood, of reconstructing her life in it, her intrigues, this alone had any charm for me. And as desire always springs from a preliminary sense of value, as had happened to me in the past with Gilberte, with the Duchesse de Guermantes, it was, in the districts in which Albertine had lived in the past, the women of her class that I sought to know, and whose presence alone I could have desired. Even without my being able to learn anything from them, they were the only women towards whom I felt myself attracted, as being those whom Albertine had known or whom she might have known, women of her class or of the classes with which she liked to associate, in a word those women who had in my eyes the distinction of resembling her or of being of the type that had appealed to her. As I recalled thus either Albertine herself, or the type for which she had doubtless felt a preference, these women aroused in me an agonising feeling of jealousy or regret, which afterwards when my grief had been dulled changed into a curiosity not devoid of charm. And among them especially the women of the working class, on account of that life, so different from the life that I knew, which is theirs. No doubt it is only in our mind that we possess things, and we do not possess a picture because it hangs in our dining-room if we are incapable of understanding it, or a landscape because we live in front of it without even glancing at it. But still

I had had in the past the illusion of recapturing Balbec, when in Paris Albertine came to see me and I held her in my arms. Similarly I obtained a contact, restricted and furtive as it might be, with Albertine's life, the atmosphere of workrooms, a conversation across a counter, the spirit of the slums, when I kissed a seamstress. Andrée, these other women, all of them in relation to Albertine—as Albertine herself had been in relation to Balbec—were to be numbered among those substitutes for pleasures, replacing one another, in a gradual degradation, which enable us to dispense with the pleasure to which we can no longer attain, a holiday at Balbec, or the love of Albertine (as the act of going to the Louvre to look at a Titian which was originally in Venice consoles us for not being able to go there), for those pleasures which, separated one from another by indistinguishable gradations, convert our life into a series of concentric, contiguous, harmonic and graduated zones, encircling an initial desire which has set the tone, eliminated everything that does not combine with it and spread the dominant colour (as had, for instance, occurred to me also in the cases of the Duchesse de Guermantes and of Gilberte). Andrée, these women, were to the desire, for the gratification of which I knew that it was hopeless, now, to pray, to have Albertine by my side, what one evening, before I knew Albertine save by sight, had been the many-faceted and refreshing lustre of a bunch of grapes.

Associated now with the memory of my love, Albertine's physical and social attributes, in spite of which I had loved her, attracted my desire on the contrary towards what at one time it would least readily have chosen: dark girls of the lower middle class. Indeed

what was beginning to a certain extent to revive in me was that immense desire which my love for Albertine had not been able to assuage, that immense desire to know life which I used to feel on the roads round Balbec, in the streets of Paris, that desire which had caused me so much suffering when, supposing it to exist in Albertine's heart also, I had sought to deprive her of the means of satisfying it with anyone but myself. Now that I was able to endure the thought of her desire, as that thought was at once aroused by my own desire, these two immense appetites coincided, I would have liked us to be able to indulge them together, I said to myself: "That girl would have appealed to her," and led by this sudden digression to think of her and of her death, I felt too unhappy to be able to pursue my own desire any farther. As, long ago, the Méséglise and Guermantes ways had established the conditions of my liking for the country and had prevented me from finding any real charm in a village where there was no old church, nor cornflowers, nor buttercups, so it was by attaching them in myself to a past full of charm that my love for Albertine made me seek out exclusively a certain type of woman; I began again, as before I was in love with her, to feel the need of things in harmony with her which would be interchangeable with a memory that had become gradually less exclusive. I could not have found any pleasure now in the company of a golden-haired and haughty duchess, because she would not have aroused in me any of the emotions that sprang from Albertine, from my desire for her, from the jealousy that I had felt of her love-affairs, from my sufferings, from her death. For our sensations, in order to be strong, need to release in us something different from

themselves, a sentiment, which will not find any satisfaction, in pleasure, but which adds itself to desire, enlarges it, makes it cling desperately to pleasure. In proportion as the love that Albertine had felt for certain women ceased to cause me pain, it attached those women to my past, gave them something that was more real, as to buttercups, to hawthorn-blossom the memory of Combray gave a greater reality than to unfamiliar flowers. Even of Andrée, I no longer said to myself with rage: "Albertine loved her," but on the contrary, so as to explain my desire to myself, in a tone of affection: "Albertine loved her dearly." I could now understand the widowers whom we suppose to have found consolation and who prove on the contrary that they are inconsolable because they marry their deceased wife's sister. Thus the decline of my love seemed to make fresh loves possible for me, and Albertine like those women long loved for themselves who, later, feeling their lover's desire grow feeble, maintain their power by confining themselves to the office of panders, provided me, as the Pompadour provided Louis XV, with fresh damsels. Even in the past, my time had been divided into periods in which I desired this woman or that. When the violent pleasures afforded by one had grown dull, I longed for the other who would give me an almost pure affection until the need of more sophisticated caresses brought back my desire for the first. Now these alternations had come to an end, or at least one of the periods was being indefinitely prolonged. What I would have liked was that the newcomer should take up her abode in my house, and should give me at night, before leaving me, a friendly, sisterly kiss. In order that I might have believed—had I not had ex-

perience of the intolerable presence of another person—that I regretted a kiss more than a certain pair of lips, a pleasure more than a love, a habit more than a person. I would have liked also that the newcomers should be able to play Vinteuil's music to me like Albertine, to talk to me as she had talked about Elstir. All this was impossible. Their love would not be equivalent to hers, I thought, whether because a love to which were annexed all those episodes, visits to picture galleries, evenings spent at concerts, the whole of a complicated existence which allows correspondences, conversations, a flirtation preliminary to the more intimate relations, a serious friendship afterwards, possesses more resources than love for a woman who can only offer herself, as an orchestra possesses more resources than a piano, or because, more profoundly, my need of the same sort of affection that Albertine used to give me, the affection of a girl of a certain culture who would at the same time be a sister to me, was—like my need of women of the same class as Albertine—merely a recrudescence of my memory of Albertine, of my memory of my love for her. And once again, I discovered, first of all that memory has no power of invention, that it is powerless to desire anything else, even anything better than what we have already possessed, secondly that it is spiritual in the sense that reality cannot furnish it with the state which it seeks, lastly that, when applied to a person who is dead, the resurrection that it incarnates is not so much that of the need to love in which it makes us believe as that of the need of the absent person. So that the resemblance to Albertine of the woman whom I had chosen, the resemblance of her affection even, if I succeeded in winning it, to Albertine's,

made me all the more conscious of the absence of what I had been unconsciously seeking, of what was indispensable to the revival of my happiness, that is to say Albertine herself, the time during which we had lived together, the past in quest of which I had unconsciously gone. Certainly, upon fine days, Paris seemed to me innumerably aflower with all these girls, whom I did not desire, but who thrust down their roots into the obscurity of the desire and the mysterious nocturnal life of Albertine. They were like the girls of whom she had said to me at the outset, when she had not begun to distrust me: "That girl is charming, what nice hair she has." All the curiosity that I had felt about her life in the past when I knew her only by sight, and on the other hand all my desires in life were blended in this sole curiosity, to see Albertine in company with other women, perhaps because thus, when they had left her, I should have remained alone with her, the last and the master. And when I observed her hesitations, her uncertainty when she asked herself whether it would be worth her while to spend the evening with this or that girl, her satiety when the other had gone, perhaps her disappointment, I should have brought to the light of day, I should have restored to its true proportions the jealousy that Albertine inspired in me, because seeing her thus experience them I should have taken the measure and discovered the limit of her pleasures. Of how many pleasures, of what an easy life she has deprived us, I said to myself, by that stubborn obstinacy in denying her instincts! And as once again I sought to discover what could have been the reason for her obstinacy, all of a sudden the memory came to me of a remark that I had made to her at Balbec on the

day when she gave me a pencil. As I rebuked her for not having allowed me to kiss her, I had told her that I thought a kiss just as natural as I thought it degrading that a woman should have relations with another woman. Alas, perhaps Albertine had never forgotten that imprudent speech.

I took home with me the girls who had appealed to me least, I stroked their virginal tresses, I admired a well-modelled little nose, a Spanish pallor. Certainly, in the past, even with a woman of whom I had merely caught sight on a road near Balbec, in a street in Paris, I had felt the individuality of my desire and that it would be adulterating it to seek to assuage it with another person. But life, by disclosing to me little by little the permanence of our needs, had taught me that, failing one person, we must content ourself with another—and I felt that what I had demanded of Albertine another woman, Mlle. de Stermaria, could have given me. But it had been Albertine; and what with the satisfaction of my need of affection and the details of her body, an interwoven tangle of memories had become so inextricable that I could no longer detach from a desire for affection all that embroidery of my memories of Albertine's body. She alone could give me that happiness. The idea of her uniqueness was no longer a metaphysical *a priori* based upon what was individual in Albertine, as in the case of the women I passed in the street long ago, but an *a posteriori* created by the contingent and indissoluble overlapping of my memories. I could no longer desire any affection without feeling a need of her, without grief at her absence. Also the mere resemblance of the woman I had selected, of the affection that I asked of her to the happi-

ness that I had known made me all the more conscious of all that was lacking before that happiness could revive. The same vacuum that I had found in my room after Albertine had left, and had supposed that I could fill by taking women in my arms, I found in them. They had never spoken to me, these women, of Vinteuil's music, of Saint-Simon's memoirs, they had not sprayed themselves with too strong a scent before coming to visit me, they had not played at interlacing their eyelashes with mine, all of which things were important because, apparently, they allow us to weave dreams round the sexual act itself and to give ourself the illusion of love, but in reality because they formed part of my memory of Albertine and it was she whom I would fain have seen again. What these women had in common with Albertine made me feel all the more clearly what was lacking of her in them, which was everything, and would never be anything again since Albertine was dead. And so my love for Albertine which had drawn me towards these women made me indifferent to them, and perhaps my regret for Albertine and the persistence of my jealousy, which had already outlasted the period fixed for them in my most pessimistic calculations, would never have altered appreciably, had their existence, isolated from the rest of my life, been subjected merely to the play of my memories, to the actions and reactions of a psychology applicable to immobile states, and had it not been drawn into a vaster system in which souls move in time as bodies move in space. As there is a geometry in space, so there is a psychology in time, in which the calculations of a plane psychology would no longer be accurate because we should not be taking into account time and one

of the forms that it assumes, oblivion; oblivion, the force of which I was beginning to feel and which is so powerful an instrument of adaptation to reality because it gradually destroys in us the surviving past which is a perpetual contradiction of it. And I ought really to have discovered sooner that one day I should no longer be in love with Albertine. When I had realised, from the difference that existed between what the importance of her person and of her actions was to me and what it was to other people, that my love was not so much a love for her as a love in myself, I might have deduced various consequences from this subjective nature of my love and that, being a mental state, it might easily long survive the person, but also that having no genuine connexion with that person, it must, like every mental state, even the most permanent, find itself one day obsolete, be "replaced," and that when that day came everything that seemed to attach me so pleasantly, indissolubly, to the memory of Albertine would no longer exist for me. It is the tragedy of other people that they are to us merely showcases for the very perishable collections of our own mind. For this very reason we base upon them projects which have all the ardour of our mind; but our mind grows tired, our memory crumbles, the day would arrive when I would readily admit the first comer to Albertine's room, as I had without the slightest regret given Albertine the agate marble or other gifts that I had received from Gilberte.[1]

[1] *In the French text of "Albertine Disparue," Volume I ends with this chapter.*

CHAPTER II

Mademoiselle de Forcheville

IT was not that I was not still in love with Albertine, but no longer in the same fashion as in the final phase. No, it was in the fashion of the earliest times, when everything that had any connexion with her, places or people, made me feel a curiosity in which there was more charm than suffering. And indeed I was quite well aware now that before I forgot her altogether, before I reached the initial stage of indifference, I should have, like a traveller who returns by the same route to his starting-point, to traverse in the return direction all the sentiments through which I had passed before arriving at my great love. But these fragments, these moments of the past are not immobile, they have retained the terrible force, the happy ignorance of the hope that was then yearning towards a time which has now become the past, but which a hallucination makes us for a moment mistake retrospectively for the future. I read a letter from Albertine, in which she had said that she was coming to see me that evening, and I felt for an instant the joy of expectation. In these return journeys along the same line from a place to which we shall never return, when we recall the names, the appearance of all the places which we have passed on the outward journey, it happens that, while our train is halting at one of the stations, we feel for an instant the illusion that we are setting off again, but in the direction of the place from which we have come, as

on the former journey. Soon the illusion vanishes, but for an instant we felt ourself carried away once again: such is the cruelty of memory.

At times the reading of a novel that was at all sad carried me sharply back, for certain novels are like great but temporary bereavements, they abolish our habits, bring us in contact once more with the reality of life, but for a few hours only, like a nightmare, since the force of habit, the oblivion that it creates, the gaiety that it restores to us because our brain is powerless to fight against it and to recreate the truth, prevails to an infinite extent over the almost hypnotic suggestion of a good book which, like all suggestions, has but a transient effect.

And yet, if we cannot, before returning to the state of indifference from which we started, dispense ourself from covering in the reverse direction the distances which we had traversed in order to arrive at love, the trajectory, the line that we follow, are not of necessity the same. They have this in common, that they are not direct, because oblivion is no more capable than love of progressing along a straight line. But they do not of necessity take the same paths. And on the path which I was taking on my return journey, there were in the course of a confused passage three halting-points which I remember, because of the light that shone round about me, when I was already nearing my goal, stages which I recall especially, doubtless because I perceived in them things which had no place in my love for Albertine, or at most were attached to it only to the extent to which what existed already in our heart before a great passion associates itself with it, whether by feeding it, or by fighting it, or by offering to our analytical mind, a contrast with it.

The first of these halting-points began with the coming of winter, on a fine Sunday, which was also All Saints' Day, when I had ventured out of doors. As I came towards the Bois, I recalled with sorrow how Albertine had come back to join me from the Trocadéro, for it was the same day, only without Albertine. With sorrow and yet not without pleasure all the same, for the repetition in a minor key, in a despairing tone, of the same motif that had filled my day in the past, the absence even of Françoise's telephone message, of that arrival of Albertine which was not something negative, but the suppression in reality of what I had recalled, of what had given the day a sorrowful aspect, made of it something more beautiful than a simple, unbroken day, because what was no longer there, what had been torn from it, remained stamped upon it as on a mould.

In the Bois, I hummed phrases from Vinteuil's sonata. I was no longer hurt by the thought that Albertine had fooled me, for almost all my memories of her had entered into that secondary chemical state in which they no longer cause any anxious oppression of the heart, but rather comfort. Now and then, at the passages which she used to play most often, when she was in the habit of uttering some reflexion which I had thought charming at the time, of suggesting some reminiscence, I said to myself: "Poor little girl," but without melancholy, merely adding to the musical phrase an additional value, a value that was so to speak historic and curious like that which the portrait of Charles I by Van Dyck, so beautiful already in itself, acquires from the fact that it found its way into the national collection because of Mme. du Barry's desire to impress the King. When the little

phrase, before disappearing altogether, dissolved into its various elements in which it floated still for a moment in scattered fragments, it was not for me as it had been for Swann a messenger from Albertine who was vanishing. It was not altogether the same association of ideas that the little phrase had aroused in me as in Swann. I had been impressed, most of all, by the elaboration, the attempts, the repetitions, the "outcome" of a phrase which persisted throughout the sonata as that love had persisted throughout my life. And now, when I realised how, day by day, one element after another of my love departed, the jealous side of it, then some other, drifted gradually back in a vague remembrance to the feeble bait of the first outset, it was my love that I seemed, in the scattered notes of the little phrase, to see dissolving before my eyes.

As I followed the paths separated by undergrowth, carpeted with a grass that diminished daily, the memory of a drive during which Albertine had been by my side in the carriage, from which she had returned home with me, during which I felt that she was enveloping my life, floated now round about me, in the vague mist of the darkening branches in the midst of which the setting sun caused to gleam, as though suspended in the empty air, a horizontal web embroidered with golden leaves. Moreover my heart kept fluttering at every moment, as happens to anyone in whose eyes a rooted idea gives to every woman who has halted at the end of a path, the appearance, the possible identity of the woman of whom he is thinking. "It is perhaps she!" We turn round, the carriage continues on its way and we do not return to the spot. These leaves, I did not merely behold them

with the eyes of my memory, they interested me, touched me, like those purely descriptive pages into which an artist, to make them more complete, introduces a fiction, a whole romance; and this work of nature thus assumed the sole charm of melancholy which was capable of reaching my heart. The reason for this charm seemed to me to be that I was still as much in love with Albertine as ever, whereas the true reason was on the contrary that oblivion was continuing to make such headway in me that the memory of Albertine was no longer painful to me, that is to say, it had changed; but however clearly we may discern our impressions, as I then thought that I could discern the reason for my melancholy, we are unable to trace them back to their more remote meaning. Like those maladies the history of which the doctor hears his patient relate to him, by the help of which he works back to a more profound cause, of which the patient is unaware, similarly our impressions, our ideas, have only a symptomatic value. My jealousy being held aloof by the impression of charm and agreeable sadness which I was feeling, my senses reawakened. Once again, as when I had ceased to see Gilberte, the love of woman arose in me, rid of any exclusive association with any particular woman already loved, and floated like those spirits that have been liberated by previous destructions and stray suspended in the springtime air, asking only to be allowed to embody themselves in a new creature. Nowhere do there bud so many flowers, forget-me-not though they be styled, as in a cemetery. I looked at the girls with whom this fine day so countlessly blossomed, as I would have looked at them long ago from Mme. de Villeparisis's carriage or from the carriage in which, upon a similar Sunday,

I had come there with Albertine. At once, the glance which I had just cast at one or other of them was matched immediately by the curious, stealthy, enterprising glance, reflecting unimaginable thoughts, which Albertine had furtively cast at them and which, duplicating my own with a mysterious, swift, steel-blue wing, wafted along these paths which had hitherto been so natural the tremor of an unknown element with which my own desire would not have sufficed to animate them had it remained alone, for it, to me, contained nothing that was unkown.

Moreover at Balbec, when I had first longed to know Albertine, was it not because she had seemed to me typical of those girls the sight of whom had so often brought me to a standstill in the streets, upon country roads, and because she might furnish me with a specimen of their life? And was it not natural that now the cooling star of my love in which they were condensed should explode afresh in this scattered dust of nebulae? They all of them seemed to me Albertines—the image that I carried inside me making me find copies of her everywhere—and indeed, at the turning of an avenue, the girl who was getting into a motor-car recalled her so strongly, was so exactly of the same figure, that I asked myself for an instant whether it were not she that I had just seen, whether people had not been deceiving me when they sent me the report of her death. I saw her again thus at the corner of an avenue, as perhaps she had been at Balbec, getting into a car in the same way, when she was so full of confidence in life. And this other girl's action in climbing into the car, I did not merely record with my eyes, as one of those superficial forms which occur so often in the course of a walk: become a sort of

permanent action, it seemed to me to extend also into the past in the direction of the memory which had been superimposed upon it and which pressed so deliciously, so sadly against my heart. But by this time the girl had vanished.

A little farther on I saw a group of three girls slightly older, young women perhaps, whose fashionable, energetic style corresponded so closely with what had attracted me on the day when I first saw Albertine and her friends, that I hastened in pursuit of these three new girls and, when they stopped a carriage, looked frantically in every direction for another. I found one, but it was too late. I did not overtake them. A few days later, however, as I was coming home, I saw, emerging from the portico of our house, the three girls whom I had followed in the Bois. They were absolutely, the two dark ones especially, save that they were slightly older, the type of those young ladies who so often, seen from my window or encountered in the street, had made me form a thousand plans, fall in love with life, and whom I had never been able to know. The fair one had a rather more delicate, almost an invalid air, which appealed to me less. It was she nevertheless that was responsible for my not contenting myself with glancing at them for a moment, but, becoming rooted to the ground, staring at them with a scrutiny of the sort which, by their fixity which nothing can distract, their application as though to a problem, seem to be conscious that the true object is hidden far beyond what they behold. I should doubtless have allowed them to disappear as I had allowed so many others, had not (at the moment when they passed by me) the fair one—was it because I was scrutinising them so

closely?—darted a stealthy glance at myself, than, having passed me and turning her head, a second glance which fired my blood. However, as she ceased to pay attention to myself and resumed her conversation with her friends, my ardour would doubtless have subsided, had it not been increased a hundredfold by the following incident. When I asked the porter who they were: "They asked for Mme. la Duchesse," he informed me. "I think that only one of them knows her and that the others were simply seeing her to the door. Here's the name, I don't know whether I've taken it down properly." And I read: "Mlle. Déporcheville," which it was easy to correct to "d'Éporcheville," that is to say the name, more or less, so far as I could remember, of the girl of excellent family, vaguely connected with the Guermantes, whom Robert had told me that he had met in a disorderly house, and with whom he had had relations. I now understood the meaning of her glance, why she had turned round, without letting her companions see. How often I had thought about her, imagining her in the light of the name that Robert had given me. And, lo and behold, I had seen her, in no way different from her friends, save for that concealed glance which established between me and herself a secret entry into the parts of her life which, evidently, were concealed from her friends, and which made her appear more accessible—almost half my own—more gentle than girls of noble birth generally are. In the mind of this girl, between me and herself, there was in advance the common ground of the hours that we might have spent together, had she been free to make an appointment with me. Was it not this that her glance had sought to express to me with an eloquence that was intelli-

gible to myself alone. My heart throbbed until it almost burst, I could not have given an exact description of Mlle. d'Éporcheville's appearance, I could picture vaguely a fair complexion viewed from the side, but I was madly in love with her. All of a sudden I became aware that I was reasoning as though, of the three girls, Mlle. d'Éporcheville could be only the fair one who had turned round and had looked at me twice. But the porter had not told me this. I returned to his lodge, questioned him again, he told me that he could not enlighten me, but that he would ask his wife who had seen them once before. She was busy at the moment scrubbing the service stair. Which of us has not experienced in the course of his life these uncertainties more or less similar to mine, and all alike delicious? A charitable friend to whom we describe a girl that we have seen at a ball, concludes from our description that she must be one of his friends and invites us to meet her. But among so many girls, and with no guidance but a mere verbal portrait, may there not have been some mistake? The girl whom we are about to meet, will she not be a different girl from her whom we desire? Or on the contrary are we not going to see holding out her hand to us with a smile precisely the girl whom we hoped that she would be? This latter case which is frequent enough, without being justified always by arguments as conclusive as this with respect to Mlle. d'Éporcheville, arises from a sort of intuition and also from that wind of fortune which favours us at times. Then, when we catch sight of her, we say to ourself: "That is indeed the girl." I recall that, among the little band of girls who used to parade along the beach, I had guessed correctly which was named Al-

bertine Simonet. This memory caused me a keen but transient pang, and while the porter went in search of his wife, my chief anxiety—as I thought of Mlle. d'Éporcheville and since in those minutes spent in waiting in which a name, a detail of information which we have, we know not why, fitted to a face, finds itself free for an instant, ready if it shall adhere to a new face to render, retrospectively, the original face as to which it had enlightened us strange, innocent, imperceptible—was that the porter's wife was perhaps going to inform me that Mlle. d'Éporcheville was, on the contrary, one of the two dark girls. In that event, there would vanish the being in whose existence I believed, whom I already loved, whom I now thought only of possessing, that fair and sly Mlle. d'Éporcheville whom the fatal answer must then separate into two distinct elements, which I had arbitrarily united after the fashion of a novelist who blends together diverse elements borrowed from reality in order to create an imaginary character, elements which, taken separately,—the name failing to corroborate the supposed intention of the glance—lost all their meaning. In that case my arguments would be stultified, but how greatly they found themselves, on the contrary, strengthened when the porter returned to tell me that Mlle. d'Éporcheville was indeed the fair girl.

From that moment I could no longer believe in a similarity of names. The coincidence was too remarkable that of these three girls one should be named Mlle. d'Éporcheville, that she should be precisely (and this was the first convincing proof of my supposition) the one who had gazed at me in that way, almost smiling at me,

and that it should not be she who frequented the disorderly houses.

Then began a day of wild excitement. Even before starting to buy all the bedizenments that I thought necessary in order to create a favourable impression when I went to call upon Mme. de Guermantes two days later, when (the porter had informed me) the young lady would be coming again to see the Duchess, in whose house I should thus find a willing girl and make an appointment (or I should easily be able to take her into a corner for a moment), I began, so as to be on the safe side, by telegraphing to Robert to ask him for the girl's exact name and for a description of her, hoping to have his reply within forty-eight hours (I did not think for an instant of anything else, not even of Albertine), determined, whatever might happen to me in the interval, even if I had to be carried down in a chair were I too ill to walk, to pay a long call upon the Duchess. If I telegraphed to Saint-Loup it was not that I had any lingering doubt as to the identity of the person, or that the girl whom I had seen and the girl of whom he had spoken were still distinct personalities in my mind. I had no doubt whatever that they were the same person. But in my impatience at the enforced interval of forty-eight hours, it was a pleasure, it gave me already a sort of secret power over her to receive a telegram concerning her, filled with detailed information. At the telegraph office, as I drafted my message with the animation of a man who is fired by hope, I remarked how much less disconcerted I was now than in my boyhood and in facing Mlle. d'Éporcheville than I had been in facing Gilberte. From the moment in which I had merely taken the trouble to

write out my telegram, the clerk had only to take it from me, the swiftest channels of electric communication to transmit it across the extent of France and the Mediterranean, and all Robert's sensual past would be set to work to identify the person whom I had seen in the street, would be placed at the service of the romance which I had sketched in outline, and to which I need no longer give a thought, for his answer would undertake to bring about a happy ending before twenty-four hours had passed. Whereas in the old days, brought home by Françoise from the Champs-Elysées, brooding alone in the house over my impotent desires, unable to employ the practical devices of civilisation, I loved like a savage, or indeed, for I was not even free to move about, like a flower. From this moment I was in a continual fever; a request from my father that I would go away with him for a couple of days, which would have obliged me to forego my visit to the Duchess, filled me with such rage and desperation that my mother interposed and persuaded my father to allow me to remain in Paris. But for many hours my anger was unable to subside, while my desire for Mlle. d'Éporcheville was increased a hundredfold by the obstacle that had been placed between us, by the fear which I had felt for a moment that those hours, at which I smiled in constant anticipation, of my call upon Mme. de Guermantes, as at an assured blessing of which nothing could deprive me, might not occur. Certain philosophers assert that the outer world does not exist, and that it is in ourself that we develop our life. However that may be, love, even in its humblest beginnings, is a striking example of how little reality means to us. Had I been obliged to draw from memory a portrait of Mlle.

d'Éporcheville, to furnish a description, an indication of her, or even to recognise her in the street, I should have found it impossible. I had seen her in profile, on the move, she had struck me as being simple, pretty, tall and fair, I could not have said anything more. But all the reactions of desire, of anxiety of the mortal blow struck by the fear of not seeing her if my father took me away, all these things, associated with an image which, after all, I did not remember and as to which it was enough that I knew it to be pleasant, already constituted a state of love. Finally, on the following morning, after a night of happy sleeplessness I received Saint-Loup's telegram: "de l'Orgeville, *de* preposition, *orge* the grain, barley, *ville* town, small, dark, plump, is at present in Switzerland." It was not she!

A moment before Françoise brought me the telegram, my mother had come into my room with my letters, had laid them carelessly on my bed, as though she were thinking of something else. And withdrawing at once to leave me by myself, she had smiled as she left the room. And I, who was familiar with my dear mother's little subterfuges and knew that one could always read the truth in her face, without any fear of being mistaken, if one took as a key to the cipher her desire to give pleasure to other people, I smiled and thought: "There must be something interesting for me in the post, and Mamma has assumed that indifferent air so that my surprise may be complete and so as not to be like the people who take away half your pleasure by telling you of it beforehand. And she has not stayed with me because she is afraid that in my pride I may conceal the pleasure that I shall feel and so feel it less keenly." Meanwhile, as she reached

the door she met Françoise who was coming into the room, the telegram in her hand. As soon as she had handed it to me, my mother had forced Françoise to turn back, and had taken her out of the room, startled, offended and surprised. For Françoise considered that her office conferred the privilege of entering my room at any hour of the day and of remaining there if she chose. But already, upon her features, astonishment and anger had vanished beneath the dark and sticky smile of a transcendent pity and a philosophical irony, a viscous liquid that was secreted, in order to heal her wound, by her outraged self-esteem. So that she might not feel herself despised, she despised us. Also she considered that we were masters, that is to say capricious creatures, who do not shine by their intelligence and take pleasure in imposing by fear upon clever people, upon servants, so as to shew that they are the masters, absurd tasks such as that of boiling water when there is illness in the house, of mopping the floor of my room with a damp cloth, and of leaving it at the very moment when they intended to remain in it. Mamma had left the post by my side, so that I might not overlook it. But I could see that there was nothing but newspapers. No doubt there was some article by a writer whom I admired, which, as he wrote seldom, would be a surprise to me. I went to the window, and drew back the curtains. Above the pale and misty daylight, the sky was all red, as at the same hour are the newly lighted fires in kitchens, and the sight of it filled me with hope and with a longing to pass the night in a train and awake at the little country station where I had seen the milk-girl with the rosy cheeks.

Meanwhile I could hear Françoise who, indignant at

having been banished from my room, into which she considered that she had the right of entry, was grumbling: "If that isn't a tragedy, a boy one saw brought into the world. I didn't see him when his mother bore him, to be sure. But when I first knew him, to say the most, it wasn't five years since he was birthed!"

I opened the *Figaro*. What a bore! The very first article had the same title as the article which I had sent to the paper and which had not appeared, but not merely the same title . . . why, there were several words absolutely identical. This was really too bad. I must write and complain. But it was not merely a few words, there was the whole thing, there was my signature at the foot. It was my article that had appeared at last! But my brain which, even at this period, had begun to shew signs of age and to be easily tired, continued for a moment longer to reason as though it had not understood that this was my article, just as we see an old man obliged to complete a movement that he has begun even if it is no longer necessary, even if an unforeseen obstacle, in the face of which he ought at once to draw back, makes it dangerous. Then I considered the spiritual bread of life that a newspaper is, still hot and damp from the press in the murky air of the morning in which it is distributed, at break of day, to the housemaids who bring it to their masters with their morning coffee, a miraculous, self-multiplying bread which is at the same time one and ten thousand, which remains the same for each person while penetrating innumerably into every house at once.

What I am holding in my hand is not a particular copy of the newspaper, it is any one out of the ten thousand, it is not merely what has been written for me, it is what

has been written for me and for everyone. To appreciate exactly the phenomenon which is occurring at this moment in the other houses, it is essential that I read this article not as its author but as one of the ordinary readers of the paper. For what I held in my hand was not merely what I had written, it was the symbol of its incarnation in countless minds. And so, in order to read it, it was essential that I should cease for a moment to be its author, that I should be simply one of the readers of the *Figaro*. But then came an initial anxiety. Would the reader who had not been forewarned catch sight of this article. I open the paper carelessly as would this not forewarned reader, even assuming an air of not knowing what there is this morning in my paper, of being in a hurry to look at the social paragraphs and the political news. But my article is so long that my eye which avoids it (to remain within the bounds of truth and not to put chance on my side, as a person who is waiting counts very slowly on purpose) catches a fragment of it in its survey. But many of those readers who notice the first article and even read it do not notice the signature; I myself would be quite incapable of saying who had written the first article of the day before. And I now promise myself that I will always read them, including the author's name, but, like a jealous lover who refrains from betraying his mistress in order to believe in her fidelity, I reflect sadly that my own future attention will not compel the reciprocal attention of other people. And besides there are those who are going out shooting, those who have left the house in a hurry. And yet after all some of them will read it. I do as they do, I begin. I may know full well that many people who

read this article will find it detestable, at the moment of reading it, the meaning that each word conveys to me seems to me to be printed on the paper, I cannot believe that each other reader as he opens his eyes will not see directly the images that I see, believing the author's idea to be directly perceived by the reader, whereas it is a different idea that takes shape in his mind, with the simplicity of people who believe that it is the actual word which they have uttered that proceeds along the wires of the telephone; at the very moment in which I mean to be a reader, my mind adjusts, as its author, the attitude of those who will read my article. If M. de Guermantes did not understand some sentences which would appeal to Bloch, he might, on the other hand, be amused by some reflexion which Bloch would scorn. Thus for each part which the previous reader seemed to overlook, a fresh admirer presenting himself, the article as a whole was raised to the clouds by a swarm of readers and so prevailed over my own mistrust of myself which had no longer any need to analyse it. The truth of the matter is that the value of an article, however remarkable it may be, is like that of those passages in parliamentary reports in which the words: "Wait and see!" uttered by the Minister, derive all their importance only from their appearing in the setting: The President of the Council, Minister of the Interior and of Religious Bodies: "Wait and see!" (Outcry on the extreme Left. "Hear, hear!" from the Left and Centre)—the main part of their beauty dwells in the minds of the readers. And it is the original sin of this style of literature, of which the famous Lundis are not guiltless, that their merit resides in the impression that they make on their readers. It is a synthetic Venus,

of which we have but one truncated limb if we confine ourself to the thought of the author, for it is realised in its completeness only in the minds of his readers. In them it finds its fulfilment. And as a crowd, even a select crowd, is not an artist, this final seal of approval which it sets upon the article must always retain a certain element of vulgarity. Thus Sainte-Beuve, on a Monday, could imagine Mme. de Boigne in her bed with its eight columns reading his article in the *Constitutionnel,* appreciating some charming phrase in which he had long delighted and which might never, perhaps, have flowed from his pen had he not thought it expedient to load his article with it in order to give it a longer range. Doubtless the Chancellor, reading it for himself, would refer to it during the call which we would pay upon his old friend a little later. And as he took her out that evening in his carriage, the Duc de Noailles in his grey pantaloons would tell her what had been thought of it in society, unless a word let fall by Mme. d'Herbouville had already informed her.

I saw thus at that same hour, for so many people, my idea or even failing my idea, for those who were incapable of understanding it, the repetition of my name and as it were a glorified suggestion of my personality, shine upon them, in a daybreak which filled me with more strength and triumphant joy than the innumerable daybreak which at that moment was blushing at every window.

I saw Bloch, M. de Guermantes, Legrandin, extracting each in turn from every sentence the images that it enclosed; at the very moment in which I endeavour to be an ordinary reader, I read as an author, but not as an

author only. In order that the impossible creature that I am endeavouring to be may combine all the contrary elements which may be most favourable to me, if I read as an author, I judge myself as a reader, without any of the scruples that may be felt about a written text by him who confronts in it the ideal which he has sought to express in it. Those phrases in my article, when I wrote them, were so colourless in comparison with my thought, so complicated and opaque in comparison with my harmonious and transparent vision, so full of gaps which I had not managed to fill, that the reading of them was a torture to me, they had only accentuated in me the sense of my own impotence and of my incurable want of talent. But now, in forcing myself to be a reader, if I transferred to others the painful duty of criticising me, I succeeded at least in making a clean sweep of what I had attempted to do in first reading what I had written. I read the article forcing myself to imagine that it was written by some one else. Then all my images, all my reflexions, all my epithets taken by themselves and without the memory of the check which they had given to my intentions, charmed me by their brilliance, their amplitude, their depth. And when I felt a weakness that was too marked taking refuge in the spirit of the ordinary and astonished reader, I said to myself: "Bah! How can a reader notice that, there is something missing there, it is quite possible. But, be dammed to them, if they are not satisfied! There are plenty of pretty passages, more than they are accustomed to find." And resting upon this ten thousandfold approval which supported me, I derived as much sense of my own strength and hope in my own talent from the article which I was reading at

that moment as I had derived distrust when what I had written addressed itself only to myself.

No sooner had I finished this comforting perusal than I who had not had the courage to reread my manuscript, longed to begin reading it again immediately, for there is nothing like an old article by oneself of which one can say more aptly that "when one has read it one can read it again." I decided that I would send Françoise out to buy fresh copies, in order to give them to my friends, I should tell her, in reality so as to touch with my finger the miracle of the multiplication of my thought and to read, as though I were another person who had just opened the *Figaro,* in another copy the same sentences. It was, as it happened, ever so long since I had seen the Guermantes, I must pay them, next day, the call which I had planned with such agitation in the hope of meeting Mlle. d'Éporcheville, when I telegraphed to Saint-Loup. I should find out from them what people thought of my article. I imagined some female reader into whose room I would have been so glad to penetrate and to whom the newspaper would convey if not my thought, which she would be incapable of understanding, at least my name, like a tribute to myself. But these tributes paid to one whom we do not love do not enchant our heart any more than the thoughts of a mind which we are unable to penetrate reach our mind. With regard to other friends, I told myself that if the state of my health continued to grow worse and if I could not see them again, it would be pleasant to continue to write to them so as still to have, in that way, access to them, to speak to them between the lines, to make them share my thoughts, to please them, to be received into their hearts.

I told myself this because, social relations having previously had a place in my daily life, a future in which they would no longer figure alarmed me, and because this expedient which would enable me to keep the attention of my friends fixed upon myself, perhaps to arouse their admiration, until the day when I should be well enough to begin to see them again, consoled me. I told myself this, but I was well aware that it was not true, that if I chose to imagine their attention as the object of my pleasure, that pleasure was an internal, spiritual, ultimate pleasure which they themselves could not give me, and which I might find not in conversing with them, but in writing remote from them, and that if I began to write in the hope of seeing them indirectly, so that they might have a better idea of myself, so as to prepare for myself a better position in society, perhaps the act of writing would destroy in me any wish to see them, and that the position which literature would perhaps give me in society I should no longer feel any wish to enjoy, for my pleasure would be no longer in society, but in literature.

After luncheon when I went down to Mme. de Guermantes, it was less for the sake of Mlle. d'Éporcheville who had been stripped, by Saint-Loup's telegram, of the better part of her personality, than in the hope of finding in the Duchess herself one of those readers of my article who would enable me to form an idea of the impression that it had made upon the public—subscribers and purchasers—of the *Figaro*. It was not however without pleasure that I went to see Mme. de Guermantes. It was all very well my telling myself that what made her house different to me from all the rest was the fact that it had for so long haunted my imagination, by knowing

the reason for this difference I did not abolish it. Moreover, the name Guermantes existed for me in many forms. If the form which my memory had merely noted, as in an address-book, was not accompanied by any poetry, older forms, those which dated from the time when I did not know Mme. de Guermantes, were liable to renew themselves in me, especially when I had not seen her for some time and when the glaring light of the person with human features did not quench the mysterious radiance of the name. Then once again I began to think of the home of Mme. de Guermantes as of something that was beyond the bounds of reality, in the same way as I began to think again of the misty Balbec of my early dreams, and as though I had not since then made that journey, of the one twenty-two train as though I had never taken it. I forgot for an instant my own knowledge that such things did not exist, as we think at times of a beloved friend forgetting for an instant that he is dead. Then the idea of reality returned as I set foot in the Duchess's hall. But I consoled myself with the reflexion that in spite of everything it was for me the actual point of contact between reality and dreams.

When I entered the drawing-room, I saw the fair girl whom I had supposed for twenty-four hours to be the girl of whom Saint-Loup had spoken to me. It was she who asked the Duchess to "reintroduce" me to her. And indeed, the moment I came into the room I had the impression that I knew her quite well, which the Duchess however dispelled by saying: "Oh! You have met Mlle. de Forcheville before." I myself, on the contrary, was certain that I had never been introduced to any girl of that name, which would certainly have impressed me,

so familiar was it in my memory ever since I had been given a retrospective account of Odette's love affairs and Swann's jealousy. In itself my twofold error as to the name, in having remembered "de l'Orgeville" as "d'Éporcheville" and in having reconstructed as "d'Éporcheville" what was in reality "Forcheville," was in no way extraordinary. Our mistake lies in our supposing that things present themselves ordinarily as they are in reality, names as they are written, people as photography and psychology give an unalterable idea of them. As a matter of fact this is not at all what we ordinarily perceive. We see, we hear, we conceive the world quite topsy-turvy. We repeat a name as we have heard it spoken until experience has corrected our mistake, which does not always happen. Everyone at Combray had spoken to Françoise for five-and-twenty years of Mme. Sazerat and Françoise continued to say "Mme. Sazerin," not from that deliberate and proud perseverance in her mistakes which was habitual with her, was strengthened by our contradiction and was all that she had added of herself to the France of Saint-André-des-Champs (of the equalitarian principles of 1789 she claimed only one civic right, that of not pronouncing words as we did and of maintaining that "hôtel," "été" and "air" were of the feminine gender), but because she really did continue to hear "Sazerin."[1] This perpetual error which is precisely "life," does not bestow its thousand forms merely upon the visible and the audible universe, but upon the social universe, the sentimental universe, the historical universe, and so forth. The Princesse de Luxembourg is

[1] See *Swann's Way*, I. 92, where, however, this error is attributed to Eulalie. C. K. S. M.

no better than a prostitute in the eyes of the Chief Magistrate's wife, which as it happens is of little importance; what is slightly more important, Odette is a difficult woman to Swann, whereupon he builds up a whole romance which becomes all the more painful when he discovers his error; what is more important still, the French are thinking only of revenge in the eyes of the Germans. We have of the universe only formless, fragmentary visions, which we complete by the association of arbitrary ideas, creative of dangerous suggestions. I should therefore have had no reason to be surprised when I heard the name Forcheville (and I was already asking myself whether she was related to the Forcheville of whom I had so often heard) had not the fair girl said to me at once, anxious no doubt to forestall tactfully questions which would have been unpleasant to her: "You don't remember that you knew me quite well long ago . . . you used to come to our house . . . your friend Gilberte. I could see that you didn't recognise me. I recognised you immediately." (She said this as if she had recognised me immediately in the drawing-room, but the truth is that she had recognised me in the street and had greeted me, and later Mme. de Guermantes informed me that she had told her, as something very odd and extraordinary, that I had followed her and brushed against her, mistaking her for a prostitute). I did not learn until she had left the room why she was called Mlle. de Forcheville. After Swann's death, Odette, who astonished everyone by her profound, prolonged and sincere grief, found herself an extremely rich widow. Forcheville married her, after making a long tour of various country houses and ascertaining that his family would

acknowledge his wife. (The family raised certain objections, but yielded to the material advantage of not having to provide for the expenses of a needy relative who was about to pass from comparative penury to opulence.) Shortly after this, one of Swann's uncles, upon whose head the successive demise of many relatives had accumulated an enormous fortune, died, leaving the whole of his fortune to Gilberte who thus became one of the wealthiest heiresses in France. But this was the moment when from the effects of the Dreyfus case there had arisen an anti-semitic movement parallel to a more abundant movement towards the penetration of society by Israelites. The politicians had not been wrong in thinking that the discovery of the judicial error would deal a fatal blow to anti-semitism. But provisionally at least a social anti-semitism was on the contrary enhanced and exacerbated by it. Forcheville who, like every petty nobleman, had derived from conversations in the family circle the certainty that his name was more ancient than that of La Rochefoucauld, considered that, in marrying the widow of a Jew, he had performed the same act of charity as a millionaire who picks up a prostitute in the street and rescues her from poverty and mire; he was prepared to extend his bounty to Gilberte, whose prospects of marriage were assisted by all her millions but were hindered by that absurd name "Swann." He declared that he would adopt her. We know that Mme. de Guermantes, to the astonishment—which however she liked and was accustomed to provoke—of her friends, had, after Swann's marriage, refused to meet his daughter as well as his wife. This refusal had been apparently all the more cruel inasmuch as what had long made marriage with

Odette seem possible to Swann was the prospect of introducing his daughter to Mme. de Guermantes. And doubtless he ought to have known, he who had already had so long an experience of life, that these pictures which we form in our mind are never realised for a diversity of reasons. Among these there is one which meant that he seldom regretted his inability to effect that introduction. This reason is that, whatever the image may be, from the trout to be eaten at sunset which makes a sedentary man decide to take the train, to the desire to be able to astonish, one evening, the proud lady at a cash-desk by stopping outside her door in a magnificent carriage which makes an unscrupulous man decide to commit murder, or to long for the death of rich relatives, according to whether he is bold or lazy, whether he goes ahead in the sequence of his ideas or remains fondling the first link in the chain, the act which is destined to enable us to attain to the image, whether that act be travel, marriage, crime . . . that act modifies us so profoundly that we cease to attach any importance to the reason which made us perform it. It may even happen that there never once recurs to his mind the image which the man formed who was not then a traveller, or a husband, or a criminal, or a recluse (who has bound himself to work with the idea of fame and has at the same moment rid himself of all desire for fame). Besides even if we include an obstinate refusal to seem to have desired to act in vain, it is probable that the effect of the sunlight would not be repeated, that feeling cold at the moment we would long for a bowl of soup by the chimney-corner and not for a trout in the open air, that our carriage would leave the cashier unmoved who perhaps for wholly dif-

ferent reasons had a great regard for us and in whom this sudden opulence would arouse suspicion. In short we have seen Swann, when married, attach most importance to the relations of his wife and daughter with Mme. Bontemps.

To all the reasons, derived from the Guermantes way of regarding social life, which had made the Duchess decide never to allow Mme. and Mlle. Swann to be introduced to her, we may add also that blissful assurance with which people who are not in love hold themselves aloof from what they condemn in lovers and what is explained by their love. "Oh! I don't mix myself up in that, if it amuses poor Swann to do stupid things and ruin his life, it is his affair, but one never knows with that sort of thing, it may end in great trouble, I leave them to clear it up for themselves." It is the *Suave mari magno* which Swann himself recommended to me with regard to the Verdurins, when he had long ceased to be in love with Odette and no longer formed part of the little clan. It is everything that makes so wise the judgments of third persons with regard to the passions which they do not feel and the complications of behaviour which those passions involve.

Mme. de Guermantes had indeed applied to the ostracism of Mme. and Mlle. Swann a perseverance that caused general surprise. When Mme. Molé, Mme. de Marsantes had begun to make friends with Mme. Swann and to bring a quantity of society ladies to see her, Mme. de Guermantes had remained instractable but had made arrangements to blow up the bridges and to see that her cousin the Princesse de Guermantes followed her example. On one of the gravest days of the crisis when, during

Rouvier's Ministry, it was thought that there was going to be war with Germany, upon going to dine with M. de Bréauté at Mme. de Guermantes's, I found the Duchess looking worried. I supposed that, since she was always dabbling in politics, she intended to shew that she was afraid of war, as one day when she had appeared at the dinner-table so pensive, barely replying in monosyllables, upon somebody's inquiring timidly what was the cause of her anxiety, she had answered with a grave air: "I am anxious about China." But a moment later Mme. de Guermantes, herself volunteering an explanation of that anxious air which I had put down to fear of a declaration of war, said to M.de Bréauté: "I am told that Marie-Aynard means to establish the Swanns. I simply must go and see Marie-Gilbert to-morrow and make her help me to prevent it. Otherwise, there will be no society left. The Dreyfus case is all very well. But then the grocer's wife round the corner has only to call herself a Nationalist and expect us to invite her to our houses in return." And I felt at this speech, so frivolous in comparison with the speech that I expected to hear, the astonishment of the reader who, turning to the usual column of the *Figaro* for the latest news of the Russo-Japanese war, finds instead the list of people who have given wedding-presents to Mlle. de Mortemart, the importance of an aristocratic marriage having displaced to the end of the paper battles upon land and sea. The Duchess had come in time moreover to derive from this perseverance, pursued beyond all normal limits, a satisfaction to her pride which she lost no opportunity of expressing. "Babal," she said, "maintains that we are the two smartest people in Paris, because he and I are

the only two people who do not allow Mme. and Mlle. Swann to bow to us. For he assures me that smartness consists in not knowing Mme. Swann." And the Duchess ended in a peal of laughter.

However, when Swann was dead, it came to pass that her determination not to know his daughter had ceased to furnish Mme. de Guermantes with all the satisfaction of pride, independence, self-government, persecution which she was capable of deriving from it, which had come to an end with the passing of the man who had given her the exquisite sensation that she was resisting him, that he was unable to make her revoke her decrees.

Then the Duchess had proceeded to the promulgation of other decrees which, being applied to people who were still alive, could make her feel that she was free to act as she might choose. She did not speak to the Swann girl, but, when anyone mentioned the girl to her, the Duchess felt a curiosity, as about some place that she had never visited, which could no longer be suppressed by her desire to stand out against Swann's pretensions. Besides, so many different sentiments may contribute to the formation of a single sentiment that it would be impossible to say whether there was not a lingering trace of affection for Swann in this interest. No doubt—for in every grade of society a worldly and frivolous life paralyses our sensibility and robs us of the power to resuscitate the dead—the Duchess was one of those people who require a personal presence—that presence which, like a true Guermantes, she excelled in protracting—in order to love truly, but also, and this is less common, in order to hate a little. So that often her friendly feeling for people, suspended during their lifetime by the irrita-

tion that some action or other on their part caused her, revived after their death. She then felt almost a longing to make reparation, because she pictured them now—though very vaguely—with only their good qualities, and stripped of the petty satisfactions, of the petty pretensions which had irritated her in them when they were alive. This imparted at times, notwithstanding the frivolity of Mme. de Guermantes, something that was distinctly noble—blended with much that was base—to her conduct. Whereas three-fourths of the human race flatter the living and pay no attention to the dead, she would often do, after their death, what the people would have longed for her to do whom she had maltreated while they were alive.

As for Gilberte, all the people who were fond of her and had a certain respect for her dignity, could not rejoice at the change in the Duchess's attitude towards her except by thinking that Gilberte, scornfully rejecting advances that came after twenty-five years of insults, would be avenging these at length. Unfortunately, moral reflexes are not always identical with what commonsense imagines. A man who, by an untimely insult, thinks that he has forfeited for all time all hope of winning the friendship of a person to whom he is attached finds that on the contrary he has established his position. Gilberte, who remained quite indifferent to the people who were kind to her, never ceased to think with admiration of the insolent Mme. de Guermantes, to ask herself the reasons for such insolence; once indeed (and this would have made all the people who shewed some affection for her die with shame on her account) she had decided to write to the Duchess to ask her what she had against a

girl who had never done her any injury. The Guermantes had assumed in her eyes proportions which their birth would have been powerless to give them. She placed them not only above all the nobility, but even above all the royal houses.

Certain women who were old friends of Swann took a great interest in Gilberte. When the aristocracy learned of her latest inheritance, they began to remark how well bred she was and what a charming wife she would make. People said that a cousin of Mme. de Guermantes, the Princesse de Nièvre, was thinking of Gilberte for her son. Mme. de Guermantes hated Mme. de Nièvre. She announced that such a marriage would be a scandal. Mme. de Nièvre took fright and swore that she had never thought of it. One day, after luncheon, as the sun was shining, and M. de Guermantes was going to take his wife out, Mme. de Guermantes was arranging her hat in front of the mirror, her blue eyes gazing into their own reflexion, and at her still golden hair, her maid holding in her hand various sunshades among which her mistress might choose. The sun came flooding in through the window and they had decided to take advantage of the fine weather to pay a call at Saint-Cloud, and M. de Guermantes, ready to set off, wearing pearl-grey gloves and a tall hat on his head said to himself: "Oriane is really astounding still. I find her delicious," and went on, aloud, seeing that his wife seemed to be in a good humour: "By the way, I have a message for you from Mme. de Virelef. She wanted to ask you to come on Monday to the Opera, but as she's having the Swann girl, she did not dare and asked me to explore the ground. I don't express any opinion, I simply convey the message.

But really, it seems to me that we might . . ." he added evasively, for their attitude towards anyone else being a collective attitude and taking an identical form in each of them, he knew from his own feelings that his wife's hostility to Mlle. Swann had subsided and that she was anxious to meet her. Mme. de Guermantes settled her veil to her liking and chose a sunshade. "But just as you like, what difference do you suppose it can make to me, I see no reason against our meeting the girl. I simply did not wish that we should appear to be countenancing the dubious establishments of our friends. That is all," "And you were perfectly right," replied the Duke. "You are wisdom incarnate, Madame, and you are more ravishing than ever in that hat." "You are very kind," said Mme. de Guermantes with a smile at her husband as she made her way to the door. But, before entering the carriage, she felt it her duty to give him a further explanation: "There are plenty of people now who call upon the mother, besides she has the sense to be ill for nine months of the year. . . . It seems that the child is quite charming. Everybody knows that we were greatly attached to Swann. People will think it quite natural," and they set off together for Saint-Cloud.

A month later, the Swann girl, who had not yet taken the name of Forcheville, came to luncheon with the Guermantes. Every conceivable subject was discussed; at the end of the meal, Gilberte said timidly: "I believe you knew my father quite well." "Why of course we did," said Mme. de Guermantes in a melancholy tone which proved that she understood the daughter's grief and with a deliberate excess of intensity which gave her the air of concealing the fact that she was not sure whether she

did remember the father. "We knew him quite well, I remember him *quite well*." (As indeed she might, seeing that he had come to see her almost every day for twenty-five years.) "I know quite well who he was, let me tell you," she went on, as though she were seeking to explain to the daughter whom she had had for a father and to give the girl information about him, "he was a great friend of my mother-in-law and besides he was very intimate with my brother-in-law Palamède." "He used to come here too, indeed he used to come to luncheon here," added M. de Guermantes with an ostentatious modesty and a scrupulous exactitude. "You remember, Oriane. What a fine man your father was. One felt that he must come of a respectable family; for that matter I saw once, long ago, his own father and mother. They and he, what worthy people!"

One felt that if they had, parents and son, been still alive, the Duc de Guermantes would not have had a moment's hesitation in recommending them for a post as gardeners! And this is how the Faubourg Saint-Germain speaks to any bourgeois of the other bourgeois, whether in order to flatter him with the exception made—during the course of the conversation—in favour of the listener, or rather and at the same time in order to humiliate him. Thus it is that an anti-semite in addressing a Jew, at the very moment when he is smothering him in affability, speaks evil of Jews, in a general fashion which enables him to be wounding without being rude.

But while she could shower compliments upon a person, when she met him, and could then never bring herself to let him take his leave, Mme. de Guermantes was also a slave to this need of personal contact. Swann might

have managed, now and then, in the excitement of conversation, to give the Duchess the illusion that she regarded him with a friendly feeling, he could do so no longer. "He was charming," said the Duchess with a wistful smile and fastening upon Gilberte a kindly gaze which would at least, supposing the girl to have delicate feelings, shew her that she was understood, and that Mme. de Guermantes, had the two been alone together and had circumstances allowed it, would have loved to reveal to her all the depth of her own feelings. But M. de Guermantes, whether because he was indeed of the opinion that the circumstances forbade such effusions, or because he considered that any exaggeration of sentiment was a matter for women and that men had no more part in it than in the other feminine departments, save the kitchen and the wine-cellar which he had reserved to himself, knowing more about them than the Duchess, felt it incumbent upon him not to encourage, by taking part in it, this conversation to which he listened with a visible impatience.

Moreover Mme. de Guermantes, when this outburst of sentiment had subsided, added with a worldly frivolity, addressing Gilberte: "Why, he was not only a great friend of my brother-in-law Charlus, he was also a great favourite at Voisenon" (the country house of the Prince de Guermantes), as though Swann's acquaintance with M. de Charlus and the Prince had been a mere accident, as though the Duchess's brother-in-law and cousin were two men with whom Swann had happened to be intimate for some special reason, whereas Swann had been intimate with all the people in that set, and as though Mme. de Guermantes were seeking to make Gilberte

understand who, more or less, her father had been, to "place" him by one of those character sketches by which, when we seek to explain how it is that we happen to know somebody whom we would not naturally know, or to give an additional point to our story, we name the sponsors by whom a certain person was introduced.

As for Gilberte, she was all the more glad to find that the subject was dropped, in that she herself was anxious only to change it, having inherited from Swann his exquisite tact combined with an intellectual charm that was appreciated by the Duke and Duchess who begged her to come again soon. Moreover, with the minute observation of people whose lives have no purpose, they would discern, one after another, in the people with whom they associated, the most obvious merits, exclaiming their wonder at them with the artless astonishment of a townsman who on going into the country discovers a blade of grass, or on the contrary magnifying them as with a microscope, making endless comments, taking offence at the slightest faults, and often applying both processes alternately to the same person. In Gilberte's case it was first of all upon these minor attractions that the idle perspicacity of M. and Mme. de Guermantes was brought to bear: "Did you notice the way in which she pronounced some of her words?" the Duchess said to her husband after the girl had left them; "it was just like Swann, I seemed to hear him speaking." "I was just about to say the very same, Oriane." "She is witty, she is just like her father." "I consider that she is even far superior to him. Think how well she told that story about the sea-bathing, she has a vivacity that Swann never had." "Oh! but he was, after all, quite witty." "I am

not saying that he was not witty, I say that he lacked vivacity," said M. de Guermantes in a complaining tone, for his gout made him irritable, and when he had no one else upon whom to vent his irritation, it was to the Duchess that he displayed it. But being incapable of any clear understanding of its causes, he preferred to adopt an air of being misunderstood.

This friendly attitude on the part of the Duke and Duchess meant that, for the future, they might at the most let fall an occasional " your poor father " to Gilberte, which, for that matter, was quite unnecessary, since it was just about this time that Forcheville adopted the girl. She addressed him as " Father ", charmed all the dowagers by her politeness and air of breeding, and it was admitted that, if Forcheville had behaved with the utmost generosity towards her, the girl had a good heart and knew how to reward him for his pains. Doubtless because she was able, now and then, and desired to shew herself quite at her ease, she had reintroduced herself to me and in conversation with me had spoken of her true father. But this was an exception and no one now dared utter the name Swann in her presence.

I had just caught sight, in the drawing-room, of two sketches by Elstir which formerly had been banished to a little room upstairs in which it was only by chance that I had seen them. Elstir was now in fashion. Mme. de Guermantes could not forgive herself for having given so many of his pictures to her cousin, not because they were in fashion, but because she now appreciated them. Fashion is, indeed, composed of the appreciations of a number of people of whom the Guermantes are typical. But she could not dream of buying others of his pictures,

for they had long ago begun to fetch absurdly high prices. She was determined to have something, at least, by Elstir in her drawing-room and had brought down these two drawings which, she declared, she "preferred to his paintings."

Gilberte recognised the drawings. "One would say Elstir," she suggested. "Why, yes," replied the Duchess without thinking, "it was, as a matter of fact, your fa . . . some friends of ours who made us buy them. They are admirable. To my mind, they are superior to his paintings." I who had not heard this conversation went closer to the drawings to examine them. "Why, this is the Elstir that . . ." I saw Mme. de Guermantes's signals of despair. "Ah, yes! The Elstir that I admired upstairs. It shews far better here than in that passage. Talking of Elstir, I mentioned him yesterday in an article in the *Figaro*. Did you happen to read it?" "You have written an article in the *Figaro?*" exclaimed M. de Guermantes with the same violence as if he had exclaimed: "Why, she is my cousin." "Yes, yesterday." "In the *Figaro*, you are certain? That is a great surprise. For we each of us get our *Figaro*, and if one of us had missed it, the other would certainly have noticed it. That is so, ain't it, Oriane, there was nothing in the paper." The Duke sent for the *Figaro* and accepted the facts, as though, previously, the probability had been that I had made a mistake as to the newspaper for which I had written. "What's that, I don't understand, do you mean to say, you have written an article in the *Figaro*," said the Duchess, making an effort in order to speak of a matter which did not interest her. "Come, Basin, you can read it afterwards." "No, the

Duke looks so nice like that with his big beard sweeping over the paper," said Gilberte. "I shall read it as soon as I am at home." "Yes, he wears a beard now that everybody is clean-shaven," said the Duchess, "he never does anything like other people. When we were first married, he shaved not only his beard but his moustaches as well. The peasants who didn't know him by sight thought that he couldn't be French. He was called at that time the Prince des Laumes." "Is there still a Prince des Laumes?" asked Gilberte, who was interested in everything that concerned the people who had refused to bow to her during all those years." "Why, no!" the Duchess replied with a melancholy, caressing gaze. "Such a charming title! One of the finest titles in France!" said Gilberte, a certain sort of banality emerging inevitably, as a clock strikes the hour, from the lips of certain quite intelligent persons. "Yes, indeed, I regret it too. Basin would have liked his sister's son to take it, but it is not the same thing; after all it is possible, since it is not necessarily the eldest son, the title may pass to a younger brother. I was telling you that in those days Basin was clean-shaven; one day, at a pilgrimage—you remember, my dear," she turned to her husband, "that pilgrimage at Paray-le-Monial—my brother-in-law Charlus who always enjoys talking to peasants, was saying to one after another: 'where do you come from?' and as he is extremely generous, he would give them something, take them off to have a drink. For nobody was ever at the same time simpler and more haughty than Mémé. You'll see him refuse to bow to a Duchess whom he doesn't think duchessy enough, and shower compliments upon a kennelman. And so, I said

to Basin: 'Come, Basin, say something to them too.' My husband, who is not always very inventive—" "Thank you, Oriane," said the Duke, without interrupting his reading of my article in which he was immersed— "approached one of the peasants and repeated his brother's question in so many words: 'Where do you come from?' 'I am from Les Laumes.' 'You are from Les Laumes. Why, I am your Prince.' Then the peasant looked at Basin's smooth face and replied. ''s not true. You're an English.'"[1] One saw thus in these anecdotes told by the Duchess those great and eminent titles, such as that of the Prince des Laumes, rise to their true position, in their original state and their local colour, as in certain Books of Hours one sees, amid the mob of the period, the soaring steeple of Bourges.

Some cards were brought to her which a footman had just left at the door. "I can't think what has come over her, I don't know her. It is to you that I am indebted for this, Basin. Not that they have done you any good, all these people, my poor dear," and, turning to Gilberte: "I really don't know how to explain to you who she is, you certainly have never heard of her, she calls herself Lady Rufus Israel."

Gilberte flushed crimson: "I do not know her," she said (which was all the more untrue in that Lady Israel and Swann had been reconciled two years before the latter's death and she addressed Gilberte by her Christian name), "but I know quite well, from hearing about her, who it is that you mean." The truth is that Gilberte had become a great snob. For instance, another girl having

[1] Mme. de Guermantes forgets that she has already told this story at the expense of the Prince de Léon. See *The Captive*, p. 39.

one day, whether in malice or from a natural want of tact, asked her what was the name of her real—not her adoptive—father, in her confusion, and as though to mitigate the crudity of what she had to say, instead of pronouncing the name as "Souann" she said "Svann," a change, as she soon realised, for the worse, since it made this name of English origin a German patronymic. And she had even gone on to say, abasing herself so as to rise higher: "All sorts of stories have been told about my birth, but of course I know nothing about that."

Ashamed as Gilberte must have felt at certain moments when she thought of her parents (for even Mme. Swann represented to her and was a good mother) of such an attitude towards life, we must, alas, bear in mind that its elements were borrowed doubtless from her parents, for we do not create the whole of our own personality. But with a certain quantity of egoism which exists in the mother, a different egoism, inherent in the father's family, is combined, which does not invariably mean that it is added, nor even precisely that it serves as a multiple, but rather that it creates a fresh egoism infinitely stronger and more redoubtable. And, in the period that has elapsed since the world began, during which families in which some defect exists in one form have been intermarrying with families in which the same defect exists in another, thereby creating a peculiarly complex and detestable variety of that defect in the offspring, the accumulated egoisms (to confine ourselves, for the moment, to this defect) would have acquired such force that the whole human race would have been destroyed, did not the malady itself bring forth, with the power to reduce it to its true dimensions, natural restrictions analogous

to those which prevent the infinite proliferation of the infusoria from destroying our planet, the unisexual fertilisation of plants from bringing about the extinction of the vegetable kingdom, and so forth. From time to time a virtue combines with this egoism to produce a new and disinterested force.

The combinations by which, in the course of generations, moral chemistry thus stabilises and renders inoffensive the elements that were becoming too formidable, are infinite and would give an exciting variety to family history. Moreover with these accumulated egoisms such as must have been embodied in Gilberte there coexists some charming virtue of the parents; it appears for a moment to perform an interlude by itself, to play its touching part with an entire sincerity.

No doubt Gilberte did not always go so far as when she insinuated that she was perhaps the natural daughter of some great personage, but as a rule she concealed her origin. Perhaps it was simply too painful for her to confess it and she preferred that people should learn of it from others. Perhaps she really believed that she was hiding it, with that uncertain belief which at the same time is not doubt, which reserves a possibility for what we would like to think true, of which Musset furnishes an example when he speaks of Hope in God. "I do not know her personally," Gilberte went on. Had she after all, when she called herself Mlle. de Forcheville, a hope that people would not know that she was Swann's daughter? Some people, perhaps, who, she hoped, would in time become everybody. She could not be under any illusion as to their number at the moment, and knew doubtless that many people must be murmuring: "Isn't that

Swann's daughter?" But she knew it only with that information which tells us of people taking their lives in desperation while we are going to a ball, that is to say a remote and vague information for which we are at no pains to substitute a more precise knowledge, founded upon a direct impression. Gilberte belonged, during these years at least, to the most widespread variety of the human ostrich, the kind which buries its head in the hope not of not being seen, which it considers hardly probable, but of not seeing that other people see it, which seems to it something to the good and enables it to leave the rest to chance. As distance makes things smaller, more uncertain, less dangerous, Gilberte preferred not to be near other people at the moment when they made the discovery that she was by birth a Swann.

And as we are near the people whom we picture to ourself, as we can picture people reading their newspaper, Gilberte preferred the papers to style her Mlle. de Forcheville. It is true that with the writings for which she herself was responsible, her letters, she prolonged the transition for some time by signing herself "G. S. Forcheville." The real hypocrisy in this signature was made manifest by the suppression not so much of the other letters of the word "Swann" as of those of the word "Gilberte." In fact, by reducing the innocent Christian name to a simple "G," Mlle. de Forcheville seemed to insinuate to her friends that the similar amputation applied to the name "Swann" was due merely to the necessity of abbreviation. Indeed she gave a special importance to the "S," and gave it a sort of long tail which ran across the "G," but which one felt to be transitory

and destined to disappear like the tail which, still long in the monkey, has ceased to exist in man.

Notwithstanding this, in her snobbishness, there remained the intelligent curiosity of Swann. I remember that, during this same afternoon, she asked Mme. de Guermantes whether she could meet M. du Lau, and that when the Duchess replied that he was an invalid and never went out, Gilberte asked what sort of man he was, for, she added with a faint blush, she had heard a great deal about him. (The Marquis du Lau had indeed been one of Swann's most intimate friends before the latter's marriage, and Gilberte may perhaps herself have seen him, but at a time when she was not interested in such people.) "Would M. de Bréauté or the Prince d'Agrigente be at all like him?" she asked. "Oh! not in the least," exclaimed Mme. de Guermantes, who had a keen sense of these provincial differences and drew portraits that were sober, but coloured by her harsh, golden voice, beneath the gentle blossoming of her violet eyes. "No, not in the least. Du Lau was the gentleman from the Périgord, charming, with all the good manners and the absence of ceremony of his province. At Guermantes, when we had the King of England, with whom du Lau was on the friendliest terms, we used to have a little meal after the men came in from shooting . . . It was the hour when du Lau was in the habit of going to his room to take off his boots and put on big woollen slippers. Very well, the presence of King Edward and all the Grand Dukes did not disturb him in the least, he came down to the great hall at Guermantes in his woollen slippers, he felt that he was the Marquis du Lau d'Ollemans who had no reason to put himself out for the King of England.

He and that charming Quasimodo de Breteuil, they were the two that I liked best. They were, for that matter, great friends of . . ." (she was about to say "your father" and stopped short). "No, there is no resemblance at all, either to Gri-gri, or to Bréauté. He was the genuine nobleman from the Périgord. For that matter, Mémé quotes a page from Saint-Simon about a Marquis d'Ollemans, it is just like him." I repeated the opening words of the portrait: "M. d'Ollemans who was a man of great distinction among the nobility of the Périgord, from his own birth and from his merit, and was regarded by every soul alive there as a general arbiter to whom each had recourse because of his probity, his capacity and the suavity of his manners, as it were the cock of his province." "Yes, he's like that," said Mme. de Guermantes, "all the more so as du Lau was always as red as a cock." "Yes, I remember hearing that description quoted," said Gilberte, without adding that it had been quoted by her father, who was, as we know, a great admirer of Saint-Simon.

She liked also to speak of the Prince d'Agrigente and of M. de Bréauté, for another reason. The Prince d'Agrigente was prince by inheritance from the House of Aragon, but his Lordship was Poitevin. As for his country house, the house that is to say in which he lived, it was not the property of his own family, but had come to him from his mother's former husband, and was situated almost halfway between Martinville and Guermantes. And so Gilberte spoke of him and of M. de Bréauté as of neighbours in the country who reminded her of her old home. Strictly speaking there was an element of falsehood in this attitude, since it was only in Paris,

through the Contesse Molé, that she had come to know M. de Bréauté, albeit he had been an old friend of her father. As for her pleasure in speaking of the country round Tansonville, it may have been sincere. Snobbishness is, with certain people, analogous to those pleasant beverages with which they mix nutritious substances. Gilberte took an interest in some lady of fashion because she possessed priceless books and portraits by Nattier which my former friend would probably not have taken the trouble to inspect in the National Library or at the Louvre, and I imagine that notwithstanding the even greater proximity, the magnetic influence of Tansonville would have had less effect in drawing Gilberte towards Mme. Sazerat or Mme. Goupil than towards M. d'Agrigente.

"Oh! poor Babal and poor Gri-gri," said Mme. de Guermantes, "they are in a far worse state than du Lau, I'm afraid they haven't long to live, either of them."

When M. de Guermantes had finished reading my article, he paid me compliments which however he took care to qualify. He regretted the slightly hackneyed form of a style in which there were "emphasis, metaphors as in the antiquated prose of Chateaubriand"; on the other hand he congratulated me without reserve upon my "occupying myself": "I like a man to do something with his ten fingers. I do not like the useless creatures who are always self-important or agitators. A fatuous breed!"

Gilberte, who was acquiring with extreme rapidity the ways of the world of fashion, announced how proud she would be to say that she was the friend of an author.

"You can imagine that I shall tell people that I have the pleasure, the honour of your acquaintance."

"You wouldn't care to come with us, to-morrow, to the Opéra-Comique?" the Duchess asked me; and I thought that it would be doubtless in that same box in which I had first beheld her, and which had seemed to me then as inaccessible as the submarine realm of the Nereids. But I replied in a melancholy tone: "No, I am not going to the theatre just now; I have lost a friend to whom I was greatly attached." The tears almost came to my eyes as I said this, and yet, for the first time, I felt a sort of pleasure in speaking of my bereavement. It was from this moment that I began to write to all my friends that I had just experienced a great sorrow, and to cease to feel it.

When Gilberte had gone, Mme. de Guermantes said to me: "You did not understand my signals, I was trying to hint to you not to mention Swann." And, as I apologised: "But I quite understand. I was on the point of mentioning him myself, I stopped short just in time, it was terrible, fortunately I bridled my tongue. You know, it is a great bore," she said to her husband, seeking to mitigate my own error by appearing to believe that I had yielded to a propensity common to everyone, and difficult to resist. "What do you expect me to do," replied the Duke. "You have only to tell them to take those drawings upstairs again, since they make you think about Swann. If you don't think about Swann, you won't speak about him."

On the following day I received two congratulatory letters which surprised me greatly, one from Mme. Goupil whom I had not seen for many years and to whom, even

at Combray, I had not spoken more than twice. A public library had given her the chance of seeing the *Figaro*. Thus, when anything occurs in our life which makes some stir, messages come to us from people situated so far outside the zone of our acquaintance, our memory of whom is already so remote that these people seem to be placed at a great distance, especially in the dimension of depth. A forgotten friendship of our school days, which has had a score of opportunities of recalling itself to our mind, gives us a sign of life, not that there are not negative results also. For example, Bloch, from whom I would have been so glad to learn what he thought of my article, did not write to me. It is true that he had read the article and was to admit it later, but by a counterstroke. In fact, he himself contributed, some years later, an article to the *Figaro* and was anxious to inform me immediately of the event. As he ceased to be jealous of what he regarded as a privilege, as soon as it had fallen to him as well, the envy that had made him pretend to ignore my article ceased, as though by the raising of a lever; he mentioned it to me but not at all in the way in which he hoped to hear me mention his article: "I know that you too," he told me, "have written an article. But I did not think that I ought to mention it to you, for fear of hurting your feelings, for we ought not to speak to our friends of the humiliations that occur to them. And it is obviously a humiliation to supply the organ of sabres and aspergills with 'five-o'clocks,' not forgetting the holy-water-stoup." His character remained unaltered, but his style had become less precious, as happens to certain people who shed their mannerisms,

when, ceasing to compose symbolist poetry, they take to writing newspaper serials.

To console myself for his silence, I read Mme. Goupil's letter again; but it was lacking in warmth, for if the aristocracy employ certain formulas which slip into watertight compartments, between the initial "*Monsieur*" and the "*sentiments distingués*" of the close, cries of joy, of admiration may spring up like flowers, and their clusters waft over the barriers their entrancing fragrance. But middle-class conventionality enwraps even the content of letters in a net of "your well-deserved success," at best "your great success." Sisters-in-law, faithful to their upbringing and tight-laced in their respectable stays, think that they have overflowed into the most distressing enthusiasm if they have written: "my kindest regards." "Mother joins me" is a superlative of which they are seldom wearied.

I received another letter as well as Mme. Goupil's, but the name of the writer was unknown to me. It was an illiterate hand, a charming style. I was desolate at my inability to discover who had written to me.

While I was asking myself whether Bergotte would have liked this article, Mme. de Forcheville had replied that he would have admired it enormously and could not have read it without envy. But she had told me this while I slept: it was a dream.

Almost all our dreams respond thus to the questions which we put to ourself with complicated statements, presentations of several characters on the stage, which however lead to nothing.

As for Mlle. de Forcheville, I could not help feeling appalled when I thought of her. What? The daughter

of Swann who would so have loved to see her at the Guermantes', for whom they had refused their great friend the favour of an invitation, they had now sought out of their own accord, time having elapsed which refashions everything for us, instils a fresh personality, based upon what we have been told about them, into people whom we have not seen during a long interval, in which we ourself have grown a new skin and acquired fresh tastes. I recalled how, to this girl, Swann used to say at times as he hugged her and kissed her: "It is a comfort, my darling, to have a child like you; one day when I am no longer here, if people still mention your poor papa, it will be only to you and because of you." Swann in anticipating thus after his own death a timorous and anxious hope of his survival in his daughter was as greatly mistaken as the old banker who having made a will in favour of a little dancer whom he is keeping and who behaves admirably, tells himself that he is nothing more to her than a great friend, but that she will remain faithful to his memory. She did behave admirably, while her feet under the table sought the feet of those of the old banker's friends who appealed to her, but all this was concealed, beneath an excellent exterior. She will wear mourning for the worthy man, will feel that she is well rid of him, will enjoy not only the ready money, but the real estate, the motor-cars that he has bequeathed to her, taking care to remove the monogram of the former owner, which makes her feel slightly ashamed, and with her enjoyment of the gift will never associate any regret for the giver. The illusions of paternal affection are perhaps no less deceiving than those of the other kind; many girls regard their fathers only as the old men who are

going to leave them a fortune. Gilberte's presence in a drawing-room, instead of being an opportunity for speaking occasionally still of her father, was an obstacle in the way of people's seizing those opportunities, increasingly more rare, that they might still have had of referring to him. Even in connexion with the things that he had said, the presents that he had made, people acquired the habit of not mentioning him, and she who ought to have refreshed, not to say perpetuated his memory, found herself hastening and completing the process of death and oblivion.

And it was not merely with regard to Swann that Gilberte was gradually completing the process of oblivion, she had accelerated in me that process of oblivion with regard to Albertine.

Under the action of desire, and consequently of the desire for happiness which Gilberte had aroused in me during those hours in which I had supposed her to be some one else, a certain number of miseries, of painful preoccupations, which only a little while earlier had obsessed my mind, had been released, carrying with them a whole block of memories, probably long since crumbled and become precarious, with regard to Albertine. For if many memories, which were connected with her, had at the outset helped to keep alive in me my regret for her death, in return that regret had itself fixed those memories. So that the modification of my sentimental state, prepared no doubt obscurely day by day by the constant disintegration of oblivion, but realised abruptly as a whole, gave me the impression which I remember that I felt that day for the first time, of a void, of the suppression in myself of a whole portion of my asso-

ciation of ideas, which a man feels in whose brain an artery, long exhausted, has burst, so that a whole section of his memory is abolished or paralysed.

The vanishing of my suffering and of all that it carried away with it, left me diminished as does often the healing of a malady which occupied a large place in our life. No doubt it is because memories are not always genuine that love is not eternal, and because life is made up of a perpetual renewal of our cells. But this renewal, in the case of memories, is nevertheless retarded by the attention which arrests, and fixes a moment that is bound to change. And since it is the case with grief as with the desire for women that we increase it by thinking about it, the fact of having plenty of other things to do should, like chastity, make oblivion easy.

By another reaction (albeit it was the distraction—the desire for Mlle. d'Éporcheville—that had made my oblivion suddenly apparent and perceptible), if the fact remains that it is time that gradually brings oblivion, oblivion does not fail to alter profoundly our notion of time. There are optical errors in time as there are in space. The persistence in myself of an old tendency to work, to make up for lost time, to change my way of life, or rather to begin to live gave me the illusion that I was still as young as in the past; and yet the memory of all the events that had followed one another in my life (and also of those that had followed one another in my heart, for when we have greatly changed, we are led to suppose that our life has been longer) in the course of those last months of Albertine's existence, had made them seem to me much longer than a year, and now this oblivion of so many things, separating me by gulfs of

empty space from quite recent events which they made me think remote, because I had had what is called "the time" to forget them, by its fragmentary, irregular interpolation in my memory—like a thick fog at sea which obliterates all the landmarks—confused, destroyed my sense of distances in time, contracted in one place, extended in another, and made me suppose myself now farther away from things, now far closer to them than I really was. And as in the fresh spaces, as yet unexplored, which extended before me, there would be no more trace of my love for Albertine than there had been, in the time past which I had just traversed, of my love for my grandmother, my life appeared to me—offering a succession of periods in which, after a certain interval, nothing of what had sustained the previous period survived in that which followed—as something so devoid of the support of an individual, identical and permanent self, something so useless in the future and so protracted in the past, that death might just as well put an end to its course here or there, without in the least concluding it, as with those courses of French history which, in the Rhetoric class, stop short indifferently, according to the whim of the curriculum or the professor, at the Revolution of 1830, or at that of 1848, or at the end of the Second Empire.

Perhaps then the fatigue and distress which I was feeling were due not so much to my having loved in vain what I was already beginning to forget, as to my coming to take pleasure in the company of fresh living people, purely social figures, mere friends of the Guermantes, offering no interest in themselves. It was easier perhaps to reconcile myself to the discovery that she whom I had

loved was nothing more, after a certain interval of time, than a pale memory, than to the rediscovery in myself of that futile activity which makes us waste time in decorating our life with a human vegetation that is alive but is parasitic, which likewise will become nothing when it is dead, which already is alien to all that we have ever known, which, nevertheless, our garrulous, melancholy, conceited senility seeks to attract. The newcomer who would find it easy to endure the prospect of life without Albertine had made his appearance in me, since I had been able to speak of her at Mme. de Guermantes's in the language of grief without any real suffering. These strange selves which were to bear each a different name, the possibility of their coming had, by reason of their indifference to the object of my love, always alarmed me, long ago in connexion with Gilberte when her father told me that if I went to live in Oceania I would never wish to return, quite recently when I had read with such a pang in my heart the passage in Bergotte's novel where he treats of the character who, separated by the events of life from a woman whom he had adored when he was young, as an old man meets her without pleasure, without any desire to see her again. Now, on the contrary, he was bringing me with oblivion an almost complete elimination of suffering, a possibility of comfort, this person so dreaded, so beneficent who was none other than one of those spare selves whom destiny holds in reserve for us, and, without paying any more heed to our entreaties than a clear-sighted and so all the more authoritative physician, substitutes without our aid, by an opportune intervention, for the self that has been too seriously injured. This renewal, as it happens, nature performs

from time to time, as by the decay and refashioning of our tissues, but we notice this only if the former self contained a great grief, a painful foreign body, which we are surprised to find no longer there, in our amazement at having become another self to whom the sufferings of his precursor are nothing more than the sufferings of a stranger, of which we can speak with compassion because we do not feel them. Indeed we are unaffected by our having undergone all those sufferings, since we have only a vague remembrance of having suffered them. It is possible that similarly our dreams, during the night, may be terrible. But when we awake we are another person to whom it is of no importance that the person whose place he takes has had to fly during our sleep from a band of cutthroats.

No doubt this self had maintained some contact with the old self, as a friend, unconcerned by a bereavement, speaks of it nevertheless, to those who come to the house, in a suitable tone of sorrow, and returns from time to time to the room in which the widower who has asked him to receive the company for him may still be heard weeping. I made this contact even closer when I became once again for a moment the former friend of Albertine. But it was into a new personality that I was tending to pass altogether. It is not because other people are dead that our affection for them grows faint, it is because we ourself are dying. Albertine had no cause to rebuke her friend. The man who was usurping his name had merely inherited it. We may be faithful to what we remember, we remember only what we have known. My new self, while it grew up in the shadow of the old, had often heard the other speak of Albertine; through that other self,

through the information that it gathered from it, it thought that it knew her, it found her attractive, it was in love with her, but this was merely an affection at second hand.

Another person in whom the process of oblivion, so far as concerned Albertine, was probably more rapid at this time, and enabled me in return to realise a little later a fresh advance which that process had made in myself (and this is my memory of a second stage before the final oblivion), was Andrée. I can scarcely, indeed, refrain from citing this oblivion of Albertine as, if not the sole cause, if not even the principal cause, at any rate a conditioning and necessary cause of a conversation between Andrée and myself about six months after the conversation which I have already reported, when her words were so different from those that she had used on the former occasion. I remember that it was in my room because at that moment I found a pleasure in having semi-carnal relations with her, because of the collective form originally assumed and now being resumed by my love for the girls of the little band, a love that had long been undivided among them, and for a while associated exclusively with Albertine's person during the months that had preceded and followed her death.

We were in my room for another reason as well which enables me to date this conversation quite accurately. This was that I had been banished from the rest of the apartment because it was Mamma's day. Notwithstanding its being her day, and after some hesitation, Mamma had gone to luncheon with Mme. Sazerat thinking that as Mme. Sazerat always contrived to invite one to meet boring people, she would be able without sacrificing any

pleasure to return home in good time. And she had indeed returned in time and without regret, Mme. Sazerat having had nobody but the most deadly people who were frozen from the start by the special voice that she adopted when she had company, what Mamma called her Wednesday voice. My mother was, nevertheless, extremely fond of her, was sorry for her poverty—the result of the extravagance of her father who had been ruined by the Duchesse de X. . . . —a poverty which compelled her to live all the year round at Combray, with a few weeks at her cousin's house in Paris and a great "pleasure-trip" every ten years.

I remember that the day before this, at my request repeated for months past, and because the Princess was always begging her to come, Mamma had gone to call upon the Princesse de Parme who, herself, paid no calls, and at whose house people as a rule contented themselves with writing their names, but who had insisted upon my mother's coming to see her, since the rules and regulations prevented Her from coming to us. My mother had come home thoroughly cross: "You have sent me on a fool's errand," she told me, "the Princesse de Parme barely greeted me, she turned back to the ladies to whom she was talking without paying me any attention, and after ten minutes, as she hadn't uttered a word to me, I came away without her even offering me her hand. I was extremely annoyed; however, on the doorstep, as I was leaving, I met the Duchesse de Guermantes who was very kind and spoke to me a great deal about you. What a strange idea that was to tell her about Albertine. She told me that you had said to her that her death had been such a grief to you. I shall never go near the Princesse

de Parme again. You have made me make a fool of myself."

Well, the next day, which was my mother's at-home day, as I have said, Andrée came to see me. She had not much time, for she had to go and call for Gisèle with whom she was very anxious to dine. "I know her faults, but she is after all my best friend and the person for whom I feel most affection," she told me. And she even appeared to feel some alarm at the thought that I might ask her to let me dine with them. She was hungry for people, and a third person who knew her too well, such as myself, would, by preventing her from letting herself go, at once prevent her from enjoying complete satisfaction in their company.

The memory of Albertine had become so fragmentary in me that it no longer caused me any sorrow and was no more now than a transition to fresh desires, like a chord which announces a change of key. And indeed the idea of a momentary sensual caprice being ruled out, in so far as I was still faithful to Albertine's memory, I was happier at having Andrée in my company than I would have been at having an Albertine miraculously restored to life. For Andrée could tell me more things about Albertine than Albertine herself had ever told me. Now the problems concerning Albertine still remained in my mind when my affection for her, both physical and moral, had already vanished. And my desire to know about her life, because it had diminished less, was now relatively greater than my need of her presence. On the other hand, the thought that a woman had perhaps had relations with Albertine no longer provoked in me anything save the desire to have relations myself also

with that woman. I told Andrée this, caressing her as I spoke. Then, without making the slightest effort to harmonise her speech with what she had said a few months earlier, Andrée said to me with a lurking smile: "Ah! yes, but you are a man. And so we can't do quite the same things as I used to do with Albertine." And whether it was that she considered that this increased my desire (in the hope of extracting confidences, I had told her that I would like to have relations with a woman who had had them with Albertine) or my grief, or perhaps destroyed a sense of superiority to herself which she might suppose me to feel at being the only person who had had relations with Albertine: "Ah! we spent many happy hours together, she was so caressing, so passionate. Besides, it was not only with me that she liked to enjoy herself. She had met a nice boy at Mme. Verdurin's, Morel. They understood each other at once. He undertook (with her permission to enjoy himself with them too, for he liked virgins) to procure little girls for her. As soon as he had set their feet on the path, he left them. And so he made himself responsible for attracting young fisher-girls in some quiet watering-place, young laundresses, who would fall in love with a boy, but would not have listened to a girl's advances. As soon as the girl was well under his control, he would bring her to a safe place, where he handed her over to Albertine. For fear of losing Morel, who took part in it all too, the girl always obeyed, and yet she lost him all the same, for, as he was afraid of what might happen and also as once or twice was enough for him, he would slip away leaving a false address. Once he had the nerve to bring one of these girls, with Albertine, to a brothel at Corliville, where four

or five of the women had her at once, or in turn. That was his passion, and Albertine's also. But Albertine suffered terrible remorse afterwards. I believe that when she was with you she had conquered her passion and put off indulging it from day to day. Then her affection for yourself was so strong that she felt scruples. But it was quite certain that, if she ever left you, she would begin again. She hoped that you would rescue her, that you would marry her. She felt in her heart that it was a sort of criminal lunacy, and I have often asked myself whether it was not after an incident of that sort, which had led to a suicide in a family, that she killed herself on purpose. I must confess that in the early days of her life with you she had not entirely given up her games with me. There were days when she seemed to need it, so much so that once, when it would have been so easy elsewhere, she could not say good-bye without taking me to bed with her, in your house. We had no luck, we were very nearly caught. She had taken her opportunity when Françoise had gone out on some errand, and you had not come home. Then she had turned out all the lights so that when you let yourself in with your key it would take you some time to find the switch, and she had not shut the door of her room. We heard you come upstairs, I had just time to make myself tidy and begin to come down. Which was quite unnecessary, for by an incredible accident you had left your key at home and had to ring the bell. But we lost our heads all the same, so that to conceal our awkwardness we both of us, without any opportunity of discussing it, had the same idea: to pretend to be afraid of the scent of syringa which as a matter of fact we adored. You were bringing a long

branch of it home with you, which enabled me to turn my head away and hide my confusion. This did not prevent me from telling you in the most idiotic way that perhaps Françoise had come back and would let you in, when a moment earlier I had told you the lie that we had only just come in from our drive and that when we arrived Françoise had not left the house and was just going on an errand. But our mistake was—supposing you to have your key—turning out the light, for we were afraid that as you came upstairs you would see it turned on again, or at least we hesitated too long. And for three nights on end Albertine could not close an eye, for she was always afraid that you might be suspicious and ask Françoise why she had not turned on the light before leaving the house. For Albertine was terribly afraid of you, and at times she would assure me that you were wicked, mean, that you hated her really. After three days she gathered from your calm that you had said nothing to Françoise, and she was able to sleep again. But she never did anything with me after that, perhaps from fear, perhaps from remorse, for she made out that she did really love you, or perhaps she was in love with some other man. In any case, nobody could ever mention syringa again in her hearing without her turning crimson and putting her hand over her face in the hope of hiding her blushes."

As there are strokes of good fortune, so there are misfortunes that come too late, they do not assume all the importance that they would have had in our eyes a little earlier. Among these was the calamity that Andrée's terrible revelation was to me. No doubt, even when bad tidings ought to make us unhappy, it so happens that

in the diversion, the balanced give and take of conversation, they pass by us without stopping, and that we ourself, preoccupied with a thousand things which we have to say in response, transformed by the desire to please our present company into some one else protected for a few moments in this new environment against the affections, the sufferings that he has discarded upon entering it and will find again when the brief spell is broken, have not the time to take them in. And yet if those affections, those sufferings are too predominant, we enter only distractedly into the zone of a new and momentary world, in which, too faithful to our sufferings, we are incapable of becoming another person, and then the words that we hear said enter at once into relation with our heart, which has not remained out of action. But for some time past words that concerned Albertine, had, like a poison that has evaporated, lost their toxic power. She was already too remote from me.

As a wayfarer seeing in the afternoon a misty crescent in the sky, says to himself: "That is it, the vast moon," so I said to myself: "What, so that truth which I have sought so earnestly, which I have so dreaded, is nothing more than these few words uttered in the course of conversation, words to which we cannot even give our whole attention since we are not alone!" Besides, it took me at a serious disadvantage, I had exhausted myself with Andrée. With a truth of such magnitude, I would have liked to have more strength to devote to it; it remained outside me, but this was because I had not yet found a place for it in my heart. We would like the truth to be revealed to us by novel signs, not by a phrase similar to those which we have constantly repeated to ourself.

The habit of thinking prevents us at times from feeling reality, makes us immune to it, makes it seem no more than another thought.

There is no idea that does not carry in itself a possible refutation, no word that does not imply its opposite. In any case, if all this was true, how futile a verification of the life of a mistress who exists no longer, rising up from the depths and coming to the surface just when we are no longer able to make any use of it. Then, thinking doubtless of some other woman whom we now love and with regard to whom the same change may occur (for to her whom we have forgotten we no longer give a thought), we lose heart. We say to ourself: "If she were alive!" We say to ourself: "If she who is alive could understand all this and that when she is dead I shall know everything that she is hiding from me." But this is a vicious circle. If I could have brought Albertine back to life, the immediate consequence would have been that Andrée would have revealed nothing. It is the same thing as the everlasting: "You'll see what it's like when I no longer love you" which is so true and so absurd, since as a matter of fact we should elicit much if we were no longer in love, but then we should no longer think of inquiring. It is precisely the same. For the woman whom we see again when we are no longer in love with her, if she tells us everything, the fact is that she is no longer herself, or that we are no longer ourself: the person who was in love has ceased to exist. There also death has passed by, and has made everything easy and unnecessary. I pursued these reflexions, adopting the hypothesis that Andrée had been telling the truth—which was possible—and had been prompted to sincerity with

me, precisely because she had now had relations with me, by that Saint-André-des-Champs side of her nature which Albertine, too, had shewn me at the start. She was encouraged in this case by the fact that she was no longer afraid of Albertine, for other people's reality survives their death for only a short time in our mind, and after a few years they are like those gods of obsolete religions whom we insult without fear, because people have ceased to believe in their existence. But the fact that Andrée no longer believed in the reality of Albertine might mean that she no longer feared (any more than to betray a secret which she had promised not to reveal) to invent a falsehood which slandered retrospectively her alleged accomplice. Had this absence of fear permitted her to reveal at length, in speaking as she did, the truth, or rather to invent a falsehood, if, for some reason, she supposed me to be full of happiness and pride, and wished to pain me? Perhaps the sight of me caused her a certain irritation (held in suspense so long as she saw that I was miserable, unconsoled) because I had had relations with Albertine and she envied me, perhaps—supposing that I considered myself on that account more highly favoured than her—an advantage which she herself had never, perhaps, obtained, nor even sought. Thus it was that I had often heard her say how ill they were looking to people whose air of radiant health, and what was more their consciousness of their own air of radiant health, exasperated her, and say in the hope of annoying them that she herself was very well, a fact that she did not cease to proclaim when she was seriously ill until the day when, in the detachment of death, it no longer mattered to her that other fortunate people should be well and

should know that she was dying. But this day was still remote. Perhaps she had turned against me, for what reason I knew not, in one of whose rages in which she used, long ago, to turn against the young man so learned in sporting matters, so ignorant of everything else, whom we had met at Balbec, who since then had been living with Rachel, and at the mention of whom Andrée overflowed in diffamatory speeches, hoping to be sued for libel in order to be able to launch against his father disgraceful accusations the falsehood of which he would not be able to prove. Quite possibly this rage against myself had simply revived, having doubtless ceased when she saw how miserable I was. Indeed, the very same people whom she, her eyes flashing with rage, had longed to disgrace, to kill, to send to prison, by false testimony if need be, she had only to know that they were unhappy, crushed, to cease to wish them any harm, and to be ready to overwhelm them with kindnesses. For she was not fundamentally wicked, and if her non-apparent, somewhat buried nature was not the kindness which one divined at first from her delicate attentions, but rather envy and pride, her third nature, buried more deeply still, the true but not entirely realised nature, tended towards goodness and the love of her neighbour. Only, like all those people who, being in a certain state of life, desire a better state, but knowing it only by desire, do not realise that the first condition is to break away from the former state—like the neurasthenics or morphinomaniacs who are anxious to be cured, but at the same time do not wish to be deprived of their manias or their morphine, like the religious hearts or artistic spirits attached to the world who long for solitude but seek nevertheless to imagine it

as not implying an absolute renunciation of their former existence—Andrée was prepared to love all her fellow-creatures, but on the condition that she should first of all have succeeded in not imagining them as triumphant, and to that end should have humiliated them in advance. She did not understand that we ought to love even the proud, and to conquer their pride by love and not by a more overweening pride. But the fact is that she was like those invalids who wish to be cured by the very means that prolong their malady, which they like and would cease at once to like if they renounced them. But people wish to learn to swim and at the same time to keep one foot on the ground. As for the young sportsman, the Verdurins' nephew, whom I had met during my two visits to Balbec, I am bound to add, as an accessory statement and in anticipation, that some time after Andrée's visit, a visit my account of which will be resumed in a moment, certain events occurred which caused a great sensation. First of all, this young man (perhaps remembering Albertine with whom I did not then know that he had been in love) became engaged to Andrée and married her, notwithstanding the despair of Rachel to which he paid not the slightest attention. Andrée no longer said then (that is to say some months after the visit of which I have been speaking) that he was a wretch, and I realised later on that she had said so only because she was madly in love with him and thought that he did not want to have anything to do with her. But another fact impressed me even more. This young man produced certain sketches for the theatre, with settings and costumes designed by himself, which have effected in the art of to-day a revolution at least equal to that brought about

by the Russian ballet. In fact, the best qualified critics regarded his work as something of capital importance, almost as works of genius and for that matter I agree with them, confirming thus, to my own astonishment, the opinion long held by Rachel. The people who had known him at Balbec, anxious only to be certain whether the cut of the clothes of the men with whom he associated was or was not smart, who had seen him spend all his time at baccarat, at the races, on the golf-course or on the polo-ground, who knew that at school he had always been a dunce, and had even been expelled from the lycée (to annoy his parents, he had spent two months in the smart brothel in which M. de Charlus had hoped to surprise Morel), thought that perhaps his work was done by Andrée who, in her love for him, chose to leave him the renown, or that more probably he was paying, out of his huge private fortune at which his excesses had barely nibbled, some inspired but needy professional to create it. People in this kind of wealthy society, not purified by mingling with the aristocracy, and having no idea of what constitutes an artist—a word which to them is represented only by an actor whom they engage to recite monologues at the party given for their daughter's betrothal, at once handing him his fee discreetly in another room, or by a painter to whom they make her sit after she is married, before the children come and when she is still at her best—are apt to believe that all the people in society who write, compose or paint, have their work done for them and pay to obtain a reputation as an author as other men pay to make sure of a seat in Parliament. But all this was false, and the young man was indeed the author of those admirable works. When I learned

this, I was obliged to hesitate between contrary suppositions. Either he had indeed been for years on end the "coarse brute" that he appeared to be, and some physiological cataclysm had awakened in him the dormant genius, like a Sleeping Beauty, or else at the period of his tempestuous schooldays, of his failures to matriculate in the final examination, of his heavy gambling losses at Balbec, of his reluctance to shew himself in the tram with his aunt Verdurin's faithful, because of their unconventional attire, he was already a man of genius, distracted perhaps from his genius, having left its key beneath the door mat in the effervescence of juvenile passions; or again, already a conscious man of genius, and at the bottom of his classes, because, while the master was uttering platitudes about Cicero, he himself was reading Rimbaud or Goethe. Certainly, there was no ground for any such hypothesis when I met him at Balbec, where his interests seemed to me to be centred solely in turning out a smart carriage and pair and in mixing cocktails. But even this is not an insuperable objection. He might be extremely vain, and this may be allied to genius, and might seek to shine in the manner which he knew to be dazzling in the world in which he lived, which did not mean furnishing a profound knowledge of elective affinities, but far rather a knowledge of how to drive four-in-hand. Moreover, I am not at all sure that later on, when he had become the author of those fine and so original works, he would have cared greatly, outside the theatres in which he was known, to greet anyone who was not in evening dress, like the "faithful" in their earlier manner, which would be a proof in him not of stupidity, but of vanity, and indeed of a certain practical sense, a

certain clairvoyance in adapting his vanity to the mentality of the imbeciles upon whose esteem he depended and in whose eyes a dinner-jacket might perhaps shine with a more brilliant radiance than the eyes of a thinker. Who can say whether, seen from without, some man of talent, or even a man devoid of talent, but a lover of the things of the mind, myself for instance, would not have appeared, to anyone who met him at Rivebelle, at the hotel at Balbec, or on the beach there, the most perfect and pretentious imbecile. Not to mention that for Octave matters of art must have been a thing so intimate, a thing that lived so in the most secret places of his heart that doubtless it would never have occurred to him to speak of them, as Saint-Loup, for instance, would have spoken, for whom the fine arts had the importance that horses and carriages had for Octave. Besides, he may have had a passion for gambling, and it is said that he has retained it. All the same, even if the piety which brought to light the unknown work of Vinteuil arose from amid the troubled life of Montjouvain, I was no less impressed by the thought that the masterpieces which are perhaps the most extraordinary of our day have emerged not from the university certificate, from a model, academic education, upon Broglie lines, but from the frequentation of "paddocks" and fashionable bars. In any case, in those days at Balbec, the reasons which made me anxious to know him, which made Albertine and her friends anxious that I should not know him, were equally detached from his merit, and could only have brought into prominence the eternal misunderstanding between an "intellectual" (represented in this instance by myself)

and people in society (represented by the little band) with regard to a person in society (the young golfer). I had no inkling of his talent, and his prestige in my eyes, like that, in the past, of Mme. Blatin, had been that of his being—whatever they might say—the friend of my girl friends, and more one of their band than myself. On the other hand, Albertine and Andrée, symbolising in this respect the incapacity of people in society to bring a sound judgment to bear upon the things of the mind and their propensity to attach themselves in that connexion to false appearances, not only thought me almost idiotic because I took an interest in such an imbecile, but were astonished beyond measure that, taking one golfer with another, my choice should have fallen upon the poorest player of them all. If, for instance, I had chosen to associate with young Gilbert de Bellœuvre; apart from golf, he was a boy who had the gift of conversation, who had secured a *proxime* in the examinations and wrote quite good poetry (as a matter of fact he was the stupidest of them all). Or again if my object had been to "make a study for a book," Guy Saumoy who was completely insane, who had abducted two girls, was at least a singular type who might "interest" me. These two might have been allowed me, but the other, what attraction could I find in him, he was the type of the "great brute," of the "coarse brute." To return to Andrée's visit, after the disclosure that she had just made to me of her relations with Albertine, she added that the chief reason for which Albertine had left me was the thought of what her friends of the little band might think, and other people as well, when they saw her living like that with a young man to whom she was not married. "Of course I know, it was

in your mother's house. But that makes no difference. You can't imagine what all those girls are like, what they conceal from one another, how they dread one another's opinion. I have seen them being terribly severe with young men simply because the men knew their friends and they were afraid that certain things might be repeated, and those very girls, I have happened to see them in a totally different light, much to their disgust." A few months earlier, this knowledge which Andrée appeared to possess of the motives that swayed the girls of the little band would have seemed to me the most priceless thing in the world. What she said was perhaps sufficient to explain why Albertine, who had given herself to me afterwards in Paris, had refused to yield to me at Balbec where I was constantly meeting her friends which I had absurdly supposed to be so great an advantage in winning her affection. Perhaps indeed it was because she had seen me display some sign of intimacy with Andrée or because I had rashly told the latter that Albertine was coming to spend the night at the Grand Hotel, that Albertine who perhaps, an hour earlier, was ready to let me take certain favours, as though that were the simplest thing in the world, had abruptly changed her mind and threatened to ring the bell. But then, she must have been accommodating to lots of others. This thought rekindled my jealousy and I told Andrée that there was something that I wished to ask her. "You did those things in your grandmother's empty apartment?" "Oh, no, never, we should have been disturbed." "Why, I thought . . . it seemed to me . . ." "Besides, Albertine loved doing it in the country." "And where, pray?" "Originally, when she hadn't time to go very far, we

used to go to the Buttes-Chaumont. She knew a house there. Or else we would lie under the trees, there is never anyone about; in the grotto of the Petit Trianon, too." "There, you see; how am I to believe you? You swore to me, not a year ago, that you had never done anything at the Buttes-Chaumont." "I was afraid of distressing you." As I have said, I thought (although not until much later) that on the contrary it was on this second occasion, the day of her confessions, that Andrée had sought to distress me. And this thought would have occurred to me at once, because I should have felt the need of it, if I had still been as much in love with Albertine. But Andrée's words did not hurt me sufficiently to make it indispensable to me to dismiss them immediately as untrue. In short if what Andrée said was true, and I did not doubt it at the time, the real Albertine whom I discovered, after having known so many diverse forms of Albertine, differed very little from the young Bacchanal who had risen up and whom I had detected, on the first day, on the front at Balbec, and who had offered me so many different aspects in succession, as a town gradually alters the position of its buildings so as to overtop, to obliterate the principal monument which alone we beheld from a distance, as we approach it, whereas when we know it well and can judge it exactly, its true proportions prove to be those which the perspective of the first glance had indicated, the rest, through which we passed, being no more than that continuous series of lines of defence which everything in creation raises against our vision, and which we must cross one after another, at the cost of how much suffering, before we arrive at the heart. If, however, I had no need to believe absolutely in Al-

bertine's innocence because my suffering had diminished, I can say that reciprocally if I did not suffer unduly at this revelation, it was because, some time since, for the belief that I feigned in Albertine's innocence, there had been substituted gradually and without my taking it into account the belief, ever present in my mind, in her guilt. Now if I no longer believed in Albertine's inocence, it was because I had already ceased to feel the need, the passionate desire to believe in it. It is desire that engenders belief and if we fail as a rule to take this into account, it is because most of the desires that create beliefs end—unlike the desire which had persuaded me that Albertine was innocent—only with our own life. To all the evidence that corroborated my original version I had stupidly preferred simple statements by Albertine. Why had I believed them? Falsehood is essential to humanity. It plays as large a part perhaps as the quest of pleasure and is moreover commanded by that quest. We lie in order to protect our pleasure or our honour if the disclosure of our pleasure runs counter to our honour. We lie all our life long, especially indeed, perhaps only, to those people who love us. Such people in fact alone make us fear for our pleasure and desire their esteem. I had at first thought Albertine guilty, and it was only my desire devoting to a process of doubt the strength of my intelligence that had set me upon the wrong track. Perhaps we live surrounded by electric, seismic signs, which we must interpret in good faith in order to know the truth about the characters of other people. If the truth must be told, saddened as I was in spite of everything by Andrée's words, I felt it to be better that the truth should at last agree with what my instinct had

originally foreboded, rather than with the miserable optimism to which I had since made a cowardly surrender. I would have preferred that life should remain at the high level of my intuitions. Those moreover which I had felt, that first day upon the beach, when I had supposed that those girls embodied the frenzy of pleasure, were vice incarnate, and again on the evening when I had seen Albertine's governess leading that passionate girl home to the little villa, as one thrust into its cage a wild animal which nothing in the future, despite appearances, will ever succeed in taming, did they not agree with what Bloch had told me when he had made the world seem so fair to me by shewing me, making me palpitate on all my walks, at every encounter, the universality of desire. Perhaps, when all was said, it was better that I should not have found those first intuitions verified afresh until now. While the whole of my love for Albertine endured, they would have made me suffer too keenly and it was better that there should have subsisted of them only a trace, my perpetual suspicion of things which I did not see and which nevertheless happened continually so close to me, and perhaps another trace as well, earlier, more vast, which was *my love itself*. Was it not indeed, despite all the denials of my reason, tantamount to knowing Albertine in all her hideousness, merely to choose her, to love her; and even in the moments when suspicion is lulled, is not love the persistence and a transformation of that suspicion, is it not a proof of clairvoyance (a proof unintelligible to the lover himself), since desire going always in the direction of what is most opposite to ourself forces us to love what will make us suffer? Certainly there enter into a person's charm, into the attraction

of her eyes, her lips, her figure, the elements unknown to us which are capable of making us suffer most intensely, so much so that to feel ourself attracted by the person, to begin to love her, is, however innocent we may pretend it to be, to read already, in a different version, all her betrayals and her faults. And those charms which, to attract me, materialised thus the noxious, dangerous, fatal parts of a person, did they perhaps stand in a more direct relation of cause to effect to those secret poisons than do the seductive luxuriance and the toxic juice of certain venomous flowers? It was perhaps, I told myself, Albertine's vice itself, the cause of my future sufferings, that had produced in her that honest, frank manner, creating the illusion that one could enjoy with her the same loyal and unrestricted comradeship as with a man, just as a parallel vice had produced in M. de Charlus a feminine refinement of sensibility and mind. Through a period of the most utter blindness, perspicacity persists beneath the very form of predilection and affection. Which means that we are wrong in speaking of a bad choice in love, since whenever there is a choice it can only be bad. "Did those excursions to the Buttes-Chaumont take place when you used to call for her here?" I asked Andrée. "Oh! no, from the day when Albertine came back from Balbec with you, except the time I told you about, she never did anything again with me. She would not even allow me to mention such things to her." "But, my dear Andrée, why go on lying to me? By the merest chance, for I never try to find out anything, I have learned in the minutest details things of that sort which Albertine did, I can tell you exactly, on the bank of the river with a laundress,

only a few days before her death." "Ah! perhaps after she had left you, that I can't say. She felt that she had failed, that she would never again be able to regain your confidence." These last words appalled me. Then I thought again of the evening of the branch of syringa, I remembered that about a fortnight later, as my jealousy kept seeking a fresh object, I had asked Albertine whether she had ever had relations with Andrée, and she had replied: "Oh! never! Of course, I adore Andrée; I have a profound affection for her, but as though we were sisters, and even if I had the tastes which you seem to suppose, she is the last person that would have entered my head. I can swear to you by anything you like, by my aunt, by my poor mother's grave." I had believed her. And yet even if I had not been made suspicious by the contradiction between her former partial admissions with regard to certain matters and the firmness with which she had afterwards denied them as soon as she saw that I was not unaffected, I ought to have remembered Swann, convinced of the platonic nature of M. de Charlus's friendships and assuring me of it on the evening of the very day on which I had seen the tailor and the Baron in the courtyard. I ought to have reflected that if there are, one covering the other, two worlds, one consisting of the things that the best, the sincerest people say, and behind it the world composed of those same people's successive actions; so that when a married woman says to you of a young man: "Oh! It is perfectly true that I have an immense affection for him, but it is something quite innocent, quite pure, I could swear it upon the memory of my parents," we ought ourself, instead of feeling any hesitation, to swear that she has probably

just come from her bath-room to which, after every assignation that she has with the young man in question, she dashes, to prevent any risk of his giving her a child. The spray of syringa made me profoundly sad, as did also the discovery that Albertine could have thought or called me cruel and hostile; most of all perhaps, certain lies so unexpected that I had difficulty in grasping them. One day Albertine had told me that she had been to an aerodrome, that the airman was in love with her (this doubtless in order to divert my suspicion from women, thinking that I was less jealous of other men), that it had been amusing to watch Andrée's raptures at the said airman, at all the compliments that he paid Albertine, until finally Andrée had longed to go in the air with him. Now this was an entire fabrication; Andrée had never visited the aerodrome in question.

When Andrée left me, it was dinner-time. "You will never guess who has been to see me and stayed at least three hours," said my mother. "I call it three hours, it was perhaps longer, she arrived almost on the heels of my first visitor, who was Mme. Cottard, sat still and watched everybody come and go—and I had more than thirty callers—and left me only a quarter of an hour ago. If you hadn't had your friend Andrée with you, I should have sent for you." "Why, who was it?" "A person who never pays calls." "The Princesse de Parme?" "Why, I have a cleverer son than I thought I had. There is no fun in making you guess a name, for you hit on it at once." "Did she come to apologise for her rudeness yesterday?" "No, that would have been stupid, the fact of her calling was an apology. Your poor grandmother would have thought it admirable. It seems

that about two o'clock she had sent a footman to ask whether I had an at-home day. She was told that this was the day and so up she came." My first thought, which I did not dare mention to Mamma, was that the Princesse de Parme, surrounded, the day before, by people of rank and fashion with whom she was on intimate terms and enjoyed conversing, had when she saw my mother come into the room felt an annoyance which she had made no attempt to conceal. And it was quite in the style of the great ladies of Germany, which for that matter the Guermantes had largely adopted, this stiffness, for which they thought to atone by a scrupulous affability. But my mother believed, and I came in time to share her opinion, that all that had happened was that the Princesse de Parme, having failed to recognise her, had not felt herself bound to pay her any attention, that she had learned after my mother's departure who she was, either from the Duchesse de Guermantes whom my mother had met as she was leaving the house, or from the list of her visitors, whose names, before they entered her presence, the servants recorded in a book. She had thought it impolite to send word or to say to my mother: "I did not recognise you," but—and this was no less in harmony with the good manners of the German courts and with the Guermantes code of behaviour than my original theory—had thought that a call, an exceptional action on the part of a royal personage, and what was more a call of several hours' duration, would convey the explanation to my mother in an indirect but no less convincing form, which is just what did happen. But I did not waste any time in asking my mother to tell me about the Princess's call, for I had just recalled a number of

incidents with regard to Albertine as to which I had meant but had forgotten to question Andrée. How little, for that matter, did I know, should I ever know, of this story of Albertine, the only story that could be of particular interest to me, or did at least begin to interest me afresh at certain moments. For man is that creature without any fixed age, who has the faculty of becoming, in a few seconds, many years younger, and who, surrounded by the walls of the time through which he has lived, floats within them but as though in a basin the surface-level of which is constantly changing, so as to bring him into the range now of one epoch now of another. I wrote to Andrée asking her to come again. She was unable to do so until a week had passed. Almost as soon as she entered the room, I said to her: "Very well, then, since you maintain that Albertine never did that sort of thing while she was staying here, according to you, it was to be able to do it more freely that she left me, but for which of her friends?" "Certainly not, it was not that at all." "Then because I was too unkind to her?" "No, I don't think so. I believe that she was forced to leave you by her aunt who had designs for her future upon that guttersnipe, you know, the young man whom you used to call 'I am in the soup,' the young man who was in love with Albertine and had proposed for her. Seeing that you did not marry her, they were afraid that the shocking length of her stay in your house might prevent the young man from proposing. Mme. Bontemps, after the young man had brought continual pressure to bear upon her, summoned Albertine home. Albertine after all needed her uncle and aunt, and when she found that they expected her to make up

her mind she left you." I had never in my jealousy thought of this explanation, but only of Albertine's desire for other women and of my own vigilance, I had forgotten that there was also Mme. Bontemps who might presently regard as strange what had shocked my mother from the first. At least Mme. Bontemps was afraid that it might shock this possible husband whom she was keeping in reserve for Albertine, in case I failed to marry her. Was this marriage really the cause of Albertine's departure, and out of self-respect, so as not to appear to be dependent on her aunt, or to force me to marry her, had she preferred not to mention it? I was beginning to realise that the system of multiple causes for a single action, of which Albertine shewed her mastery in her relations with her girl friends when she allowed each of them to suppose that it was for her sake that she had come, was only a sort of artificial, deliberate symbol of the different aspects that an action assumes according to the point of view that we adopt. The astonishment, I might almost say the shame that I felt at never having even once told myself that Albertine, in my house, was in a false position, which might give offence to her aunt, it was not the first, nor was it the last time that I felt it. How often has it been my lot, after I have sought to understand the relations between two people and the crises that they bring about, to hear, all of a sudden, a third person speak to me of them from his own point of view, for he has even closer relations with one of the two, a point of view which has perhaps been the cause of the crisis. And if people's actions remain so indefinite, how should not the people themselves be equally indefinite? If I listened to the people who maintained that

Albertine was a schemer who had tried to get one man after another to marry her, it was not difficult to imagine how they would have defined her life with me. And yet to my mind she had been a victim, a victim who perhaps was not altogether pure, but in that case guilty for other reasons, on account of vices to which people did not refer. But we must above all say to ourself this: on the one hand, lying is often a trait of character; on the other hand, in women who would not otherwise be liars, it is a natural defence, improvised at first, then more and more organised, against that sudden danger which would be capable of destroying all life: love. On the other hand again, it is not the effect of chance if men who are intelligent and sensitive invariably give themselves to insensitive and inferior women, and are at the same time so attached to them that the proof that they are not loved does not in the least cure them of the instinct to sacrifice everything else in the attempt to keep such a woman with them. If I say that such men need to suffer, I am saying something that is accurate while suppressing the preliminary truths which make that need—involuntary in a sense—to suffer a perfectly comprehensible consequence of those truths. Without taking into account that, complete natures being rare, a man who is highly sensitive and highly intelligent will generally have little will-power, will be the plaything of habit and of that fear of suffering in the immediate present which condemns us to perpetual suffering—and that in those conditions he will never be prepared to repudiate the woman who does not love him. We may be surprised that he should be content with so little love, but we ought rather to picture to ourself the grief that may be caused him by the

love which he himself feels. A grief which we ought not to pity unduly, for those terrible commotions which are caused by an unrequited love, by the departure, the death of a mistress, are like those attacks of paralysis which at first leave us helpless, but after which our muscles begin by degrees to recover their vital elasticity and energy. What is more, this grief does not lack compensation. These sensitive and intelligent men are as a rule little inclined to falsehood. This takes them all the more by surprise inasmuch as, intelligent as they may be, they live in the world of possibilities, react little, live in the grief which a woman has just inflicted on them, rather than in the clear perception of what she had in mind, what she was doing, of the man with whom she was in love, a perception granted chiefly to deliberate natures which require it in order to prepare against the future instead of lamenting the past. And so these men feel that they are betrayed without quite knowing how. Wherefore the mediocre woman with whom we were surprised to see them fall in love enriches the universe for them far more than an intelligent woman would have done. Behind each of her words, they feel that a lie is lurking, behind each house to which she says that she has gone, another house, behind each action, each person, another action, another person. Doubtless they do not know what or whom, have not the energy, would not perhaps find it possible to discover. A lying woman, by an extremely simple trick, can beguile, without taking the trouble to change her method, any number of people, and, what is more, the very person who ought to have discovered the trick. All this creates, in front of the sensitive and intelligent man, a universe all depth which his

jealousy would fain plumb and which is not without interest to his intelligence.

Albeit I was not exactly a man of that category, I was going perhaps, now that Albertine was dead, to learn the secret of her life. Here again, do not these indiscretions which occur only after a person's life on earth is ended, prove that nobody believes, really, in a future state. If these indiscretions are true, we ought to fear the resentment of her whose actions we are revealing fully as much on the day when we shall meet her in heaven, as we feared it so long as she was alive, when we felt ourself bound to keep her secret. And if these indiscretions are false, invented because she is no longer present to contradict them, we ought to be even more afraid of the dead woman's wrath if we believed in heaven. But no one does believe in it. So that it was possible that a long debate had gone on in Albertine's heart between staying with me and leaving me, but that her decision to leave me had been made on account of her aunt, or of that young man, and not on account of women to whom perhaps she had never given a thought. The most serious thing to my mind was that Andrée, albeit she had nothing now to conceal from me as to Albertine's morals, swore to me that nothing of the sort had ever occurred between Albertine on the one hand and Mlle. Vinteuil or her friend on the other. (Albertine herself was unconscious of her own instincts when she first met the girls, and they, from that fear of making a mistake in the object of our desire, which breeds as many errors as desire itself, regarded her as extremely hostile to that sort of thing. Perhaps later on they had learned that her tastes were similar to their own, but by that time they knew Albertine too well and Al-

bertine knew them too well for there to be any thought of their doing things together.) In short I did not understand any better than before why Albertine had left me. If the face of a woman is perceived with difficulty by our eyes which cannot take in the whole of its moving surface, by our lips, still more by our memory, if it is shrouded in obscurity according to her social position, according to the level at which we are situated, how much thicker is the veil drawn between the actions of her whom we see and her motives. Her motives are situated in a more distant plane, which we do not perceive, and engender moreover actions other than those which we know and often in absolute contradiction to them. When has there not been some man in public life, regarded as a saint by his friends, who is discovered to have forged documents, robbed the State, betrayed his country? How often is a great nobleman robbed by a steward whom he has brought up from childhood, ready to swear that he was an honest man, as possibly he was. Now this curtain that screens another person's motives, how much more impenetrable does it become if we are in love with that person, for it clouds our judgment and also obscures the actions of her who, feeling that she is loved, ceases at once to attach any value to what otherwise would doubtless have seemed to her important, such as wealth for example. Perhaps moreover she is impelled to pretend, to a certain extent, this scorn of wealth in the hope of obtaining more money by making us suffer. The bargaining instinct also may be involved. And so with the actual incidents in her life, an intrigue which she has confided to no one for fear of its being revealed to us, which many people might, for all that, have discovered,

had they felt the same passionate desire to know it as ourself, while preserving freer minds, arousing fewer suspicions in the guilty party, an intrigue of which certain people have not been unaware—but people whom we do not know and should not know how to find. And among all these reasons for her adopting an inexplicable attitude towards us, we must include those idiosyncracies of character which impel a person, whether from indifference to his own interests, or from hatred, or from love of freedom, or from sudden bursts of anger, or from fear of what certain people will think, to do the opposite of what we expected. And then there are the differences of environment, of upbringing, in which we refuse to believe because, when we are talking together, they are effaced by our speech, but which return, when we are apart, to direct the actions of each of us from so opposite a point of view that there is no possibility of their meeting. "But, my dear Andrée, you are lying again. Remember —you admitted it to me yourself,—I telephoned to you the evening before; you remember Albertine had been so anxious, and kept it from me as though it had been something that I must not know about, to go to the afternoon party at the Verdurins' at which Mlle. Vinteuil was expected." "Yes, but Albertine had not the slightest idea that Mlle. Vinteuil was to be there." "What? You yourself told me that she had met Mme. Verdurin a few days earlier. Besides, Andrée, there is no point in our trying to deceive one another. I found a letter one morning in Albertine's room, a note from Mme. Verdurin begging her to come that afternoon." And I shewed her the note which, as a matter of fact, Françoise had taken care to bring to my notice by placing it on the surface of

Albertine's possessions a few days before her departure, and, I am afraid, leaving it there to make Albertine suppose that I had been rummaging among her things, to let her know in any case that I had seen it. And I had often asked myself whether Françoise's ruse had not been largely responsible for the departure of Albertine, who saw that she could no longer conceal anything from me, and felt disheartened, vanquished. I shewed Andrée the letter: "I feel no compunction, everything is excused by this strong family feeling. . . ." "You know very well, Andrée, that Albertine used always to say that Mlle. Vinteuil's friend was indeed a mother, an elder sister to her." "But you have misinterpreted this note. The person that Mme. Verdurin wished Albertine to meet that afternoon was not at all Mlle. Vinteuil's friend, it was the young man you call 'I am in the soup,' and the strong family feeling is what Mme. Verdurin felt for the brute who is after all her nephew. At the same time I think that Albertine did hear afterwards that Mlle. Vinteuil was to be there, Mme. Verdurin may have let her know separately. Of course the thought of seeing her friend again gave her pleasure, reminded her of happy times in the past, but just as you would be glad, if you were going to some place, to know that Elstir would be there, but no more than that, not even as much. No, if Albertine was unwilling to say why she wanted to go to Mme. Verdurin's, it is because it was a rehearsal to which Mme. Verdurin had invited a very small party, including that nephew of hers whom you had met at Balbec, to whom Mme. Bontemps was hoping to marry Albertine and to whom Albertine wanted to talk. A fine lot of people!" And so Albertine, in spite of what Andrée's mother used

to think, had had after all the prospect of a wealthy marriage. And when she had wanted to visit Mme. Verdurin, when she spoke to her in secret, when she had been so annoyed that I should have gone there that evening without warning her, the plot that had been woven by her and Mme. Verdurin had had as its object her meeting not Mlle. Vinteuil but the nephew with whom Albertine was in love and for whom Mme. Verdurin was acting as go-between, with the satisfaction in working for the achievement of one of those marriages which surprise us in certain families into whose state of mind we do not enter completely, supposing them to be intent upon a rich bride. Now I had never given another thought to this nephew who had perhaps been the initiator thanks to whom I had received her first kiss. And for the whole plane of Albertine's motives which I had constructed, I must now substitute another, or rather superimpose it, for perhaps it did not exclude the other, a preference for women did not prevent her from marrying. "And anyhow there is no need to seek out all these explanations," Andrée went on. "Heaven only knows how I loved Albertine and what a good creature she was, but really, after she had typhoid (a year before you first met us all) she was an absolute madcap. All of a sudden she would be disgusted with what she was doing, all her plans would have to be changed at once, and she herself probably could not tell you why. You remember the year when you first came to Balbec, the year when you met us all? One fine day she made some one send her a telegram calling her back to Paris, she had barely time to pack her trunks. But there was absolutely no reason for her to go. All the excuses that she made were false. Paris

was impossible for her at the moment. We were all of us still at Balbec. The golf club wasn't closed, indeed the heats for the cup which she was so keen on winning weren't finished. She was certain to win it. It only meant staying on for another week. Well, off she went. I have often spoken to her about it since. She said herself that she didn't know why she had left, that she felt home-sick (the home being Paris, you can imagine how likely that was), that she didn't feel happy at Balbec, that she thought that there were people there who were laughing at her." And I told myself that there was this amount of truth in what Andrée said that, if differences between minds account for the different impressions produced upon one person and another by the same work, for differences of feeling, for the impossibility of captivating a person to whom we do not appeal, there are also the differences between characters, the peculiarities of a single character, which are also motives for action. Then I ceased to think about this explanation and said to myself how difficult it is to know the truth in this world. I had indeed observed Albertine's anxiety to go to Mme. Verdurin's and her concealment of it and I had not been mistaken. But then even if we do manage to grasp one fact like this, there are others which we perceive only in their outward appearance, for the reverse of the tapestry, the real side of the action, of the intrigue,—as well as that of the intellect, of the heart—is hidden from us and we see pass before us only flat silhouettes of which we say to ourself: it is this, it is that; it is on her account, or on some one's else. The revelation of the fact that Mlle. Vinteuil was expected had seemed to me an explanation all the more logical seeing that Albertine had

anticipated it by mentioning her to me. And subsequently had she not refused to swear to me that Mlle. Vinteuil's presence gave her no pleasure? And here, with regard to this young man, I remembered a point which I had forgotten; a little time earlier, while Albertine was staying with me, I had met him, and he had been—in contradiction of his attitude at Balbec—extremely friendly, even affectionate with me, had begged me to allow him to call upon me, which I had declined to do for a number of reasons. And now I realised that it was simply because, knowing that Albertine was staying in the house, he had wished to be on good terms with me so as to have every facility for seeing her and for carrying her off from me, and I concluded that he was a scoundrel. Some time later, when I attended the first performances of this young man's works, no doubt I continued to think that if he had been so anxious to call upon me, it was for Albertine's sake, but, while I felt this to be reprehensible, I remembered that in the past if I had gone down to Doncières, to see Saint-Loup, it was really because I was in love with Mme. de Guermantes. It is true that the situation was not identical, since Saint-Loup had not been in love with Mme. de Guermantes, with the result that there was in my affection for him a trace of duplicity perhaps, but no treason. But I reflected afterwards that this affection which we feel for the person who controls the object of our desire, we feel equally if the person controls that object while loving it himself. No doubt, we have then to struggle against a friendship which will lead us straight to treason. And I think that this is what I have always done. But in the case of those who have not the strength to struggle, we

cannot say that in them the friendship that they affect for the controller is a mere ruse; they feel it sincerely and for that reason display it with an ardour which, once the betrayal is complete, means that the betrayed husband or lover is able to say with a stupefied indignation: "If you had heard the protestations of affection that the wretch showered on me! That a person should come to rob a man of his treasure, that I can understand. But that he should feel the diabolical need to assure him first of all of his friendship, is a degree of ignominy and perversity which it is impossible to imagine." Now, there is no such perversity in the action, nor even an absolutely clear falsehood. The affection of this sort which Albertine's pseudo-fiancé had manifested for me that day had yet another excuse, being more complex than a simple consequence of his love for Albertine. It had been for a short time only that he had known himself, confessed himself, been anxious to be proclaimed an intellectual. For the first time values other than sporting or amatory existed for him. The fact that I had been regarded with esteem by Elstir, by Bergotte, that Albertine had perhaps told him of the way in which I criticised writers which led her to imagine that I might myself be able to write, had the result that all of a sudden I had become to him (to the new man who he at last realised himself to be) an interesting person with whom he would like to be associated, to whom he would like to confide his plans, whom he would ask perhaps for an introduction to Elstir. With the result that he was sincere when he asked if he might call upon me, expressing a regard for me to which intellectual reasons as well as the thought of Albertine imparted sincerity. No doubt it was not *for that* that

he was so anxious to come and see me and would have sacrificed everything else with that object. But of this last reason which did little more than raise to a sort of impassioned paroxysm the two other reasons, he was perhaps unaware himself, and the other two existed really, as might have existed really in Albertine when she had been anxious to go, on the afternoon of the rehearsal, to Mme. Verdurin's, the perfectly respectable pleasure that she would feel in meeting again friends of her childhood, who in her eyes were no more vicious than she was in theirs, in talking to them, in shewing them, by the mere fact of her presence at the Verdurins', that the poor little girl whom they had known was now invited to a distinguished house, the pleasure also that she might perhaps have felt in listening to Vinteuil's music. If all this was true, the blush that had risen to Albertine's cheeks when I mentioned Mlle. Vinteuil was due to what I had done with regard to that afternoon party which she had tried to keep secret from me, because of that proposal of marriage of which I was not to know. Albertine's refusal to swear to me that she would not have felt any pleasure in meeting Mlle. Vinteuil again at that party had at the moment intensified my torment, strengthened my suspicions, but proved to me in retrospect that she had been determined to be sincere, and even over an innocent matter, perhaps simply because it was an innocent matter. There remained what Andrée had told me about her relations with Albertine. Perhaps, however, even without going so far as to believe that Andrée had invented the story solely in order that I might not feel happy and might not feel myself superior to her, I might still suppose that she had slightly exaggerated her ac-

count of what she used to do with Albertine, and that Albertine, by a mental restriction, diminished slightly also what she had done with André, making use systematically of certain definitions which I had stupidly formulated upon the subject, finding that her relations with Andrée did not enter into the field of what she was obliged to confess to me and that she could deny them without lying. But why should I believe that it was she rather than Andrée who was lying? Truth and life are very arduous, and there remained to me from them, without my really knowing them, an impression in which sorrow was perhaps actually dominated by exhaustion.

As for the third occasion on which I remember that I was conscious of approaching an absolute indifference with regard to Albertine (and on this third occasion I felt that I had entirely arrived at it), it was one day, at Venice, a long time after Andrée's last visit.

CHAPTER III

Venice

MY mother had brought me for a few weeks to Venice and—as there may be beauty in the most precious as well as in the humblest things—I was receiving there impressions analogous to those which I had felt so often in the past at Combray, but transposed into a wholly different and far richer key. When at ten o'clock in the morning my shutters were thrown open, I saw ablaze in the sunlight, instead of the black marble into which the slates of Saint-Hilaire used to turn, the Golden Angel on the Campanile of San Marco. In its dazzling glitter, which made it almost impossible to fix it in space, it promised me with its outstretched arms, for the moment, half an hour later, when I was to appear on the Piazzetta, a joy more certain than any that it could ever in the past have been bidden to announce to men of good will. I could see nothing but itself, so long as I remained in bed, but as the whole world is merely a vast sun-dial, a single lighted segment of which enables us to tell what o'clock it is, on the very first morning I was reminded of the shops in the Place de l'Eglise at Combray, which, on Sunday mornings, were always on the point of shutting when I arrived for mass, while the straw in the market place smelt strongly in the already hot sunlight. But on the second morning, what I saw, when I awoke, what made me get out of bed (because

they had taken the place in my consciousness and in my desire of my memories of Combray), were the impressions of my first morning stroll in Venice, Venice whose daily life was no less real than that of Combray, where as at Combray on Sunday mornings one had the delight of emerging upon a festive street, but where that street was paved with water of a sapphire blue, refreshed by little ripples of cooler air, and of so solid a colour that my tired eyes might, in quest of relaxation and without fear of its giving way, rest their gaze upon it. Like, at Combray, the worthy folk of the Rue de l'Oiseau, so in this strange town also, the inhabitants did indeed emerge from houses drawn up in line, side by side, along the principal street, but the part played there by houses that cast a patch of shade before them was in Venice entrusted to palaces of porphyry and jasper, over the arched door of which the head of a bearded god (projecting from its alignment, like the knocker on a door at Combray) had the effect of darkening with its shadow, not the brownness of the soil but the splendid blue of the water. On the piazza, the shadow that would have been cast at Combray by the linen-draper's awning and the barber's pole, turned into the tiny blue flowers scattered at its feet upon the desert of sun-scorched tiles by the silhouette of a Renaissance façade, which is not to say that, when the sun was hot, we were not obliged, in Venice as at Combray, to pull down the blinds between ourselves and the Canal, but they hung behind the quatrefoils and foliage of gothic windows. Of this sort was the window in our hotel behind the pillars of which my mother sat waiting for me, gazing at the Canal with a patience which she would not have displayed in the old days at Com-

bray, at that time when, reposing in myself hopes which had never been realised, she was unwilling to let me see how much she loved me. Nowadays she was well aware that an apparent coldnes on her part would alter nothing, and the affection that she lavished upon me was like those forbidden foods which are no longer withheld from invalids, when it is certain that they are past recovery. To be sure, the humble details which gave an individuality to the window of my aunt Léonie's bedroom, seen from the Rue de l'Oiseau, the asymmetry of its position not midway between the windows on either side of it, the exceptional height of its wooden ledge, the slanting bar which kept the shutters closed, the two curtains of glossy blue satin, divided and kept apart by their rod, the equivalent of all these things existed in this hotel in Venice where I could hear also those words, so distinctive, so eloquent, which enable us to recognise at a distance the house to which we are going home to luncheon, and afterwards remain in our memory as testimony that, during a certain period of time, that house was ours; but the task of uttering them had, in Venice, devolved not, as at Combray, and indeed, to a certain extent, everywhere, upon the simplest, that is to say the least beautiful things, but upon the almost oriental arch of a façade which is reproduced among the casts in every museum as one of the supreme achievements of the domestic architecture of the middle ages; from a long way away and when I had barely passed San Giorgio Maggiore, I caught sight of this arched window which had already seen me, and the spring of its broken curves added to its smile of welcome the distinction of a loftier, scarcely comprehensible gaze. And since, behind those pillars of differently col-

oured marble, Mamma was sitting reading while she waited for me to return, her face shrouded in a tulle veil as agonising in its whiteness as her hair to myself who felt that my mother, wiping away her tears, had pinned it to her straw hat, partly with the idea of appearing "dressed" in the eyes of the hotel staff, but principally so as to appear to me less "in mourning," less sad, almost consoled for the death of my grandmother; since, not having recognised me at first, as soon as I called to her from the gondola, she sent out to me, from the bottom of her heart, a love which stopped only where there was no longer any material substance to support it on the surface of her impassioned gaze which she brought as close to me as possible, which she tried to thrust forward to the advanced post of her lips, in a smile which seemed to be kissing me, in the framework and beneath the canopy of the more discreet smile of the arched window illuminated by the midday sun; for these reasons, that window has assumed in my memory the precious quality of things that have had, simultaneously, side by side with ourself, their part in a certain hour that struck, the same for us and for them; and however full of admirable tracery its mullions may be, that illustrious window retains in my sight the intimate aspect of a man of genius with whom we have spent a month in some holiday resort, where he has acquired a friendly regard for us; and if, ever since then, whenever I see a cast of that window in a museum, I feel the tears starting to my eyes, it is simply because the window says to me the thing that touches me more than anything else in the world: "I remember your mother so well."

And as I went indoors to join my mother who had

left the window, I did indeed recapture, coming from the warm air outside, that feeling of coolness that I had known long ago at Combray when I went upstairs to my room, but at Venice it was a breeze from the sea that kept the air cool, and no longer upon a little wooden staircase with narrow steps, but upon the noble surfaces of blocks of marble, splashed at every moment by a shaft of greenish sunlight, which to the valuable instruction in the art of Chardin, acquired long ago, added a lesson in that of Veronese. And since at Venice it is to works of art, to things of priceless beauty, that the task is entrusted of giving us our impressions of everyday life, we may sketch the character of this city, using the pretext that the Venice of certain painters is coldly aesthetic in its most celebrated parts, by representing only (let us make an exception of the superb studies of Maxime Dethomas) its poverty-stricken aspects, in the quarters where everything that creates its splendour is concealed, and to make Venice more intimate and more genuine give it a resemblance to Aubervilliers. It has been the mistake of some very great artists, that, by a quite natural reaction from the artificial Venice of bad painters, they have attached themselves exclusively to the Venice which they have found more realistic, to some humble *campo,* some tiny deserted *rio.* It was this Venice that I used often to explore in the afternoon, when I did not go out with my mother. The fact was that it was easier to find there women of the industrial class, match-makers, pearl-stringers, workers in glass or lace, working women in black shawls with long fringes. My gondola followed the course of the small canals; like the mysterious hand of a Genie leading me through the maze of this oriental

city, they seemed, as I advanced, to be carving a road for me through the heart of a crowded quarter which they clove asunder, barely dividing with a slender fissure, arbitrarily carved, the tall houses with their tiny Moorish windows; and, as though the magic guide had been holding a candle in his hand and were lighting the way for me, they kept casting ahead of them a ray of sunlight for which they cleared a path.

One felt that between the mean dwellings which the canal had just parted and which otherwise would have formed a compact whole, no open space had been reserved. With the result that the belfry of the church, or the garden-trellis rose sheer above the *rio* as in a flooded city. But with churches as with gardens, thanks to the same transposition as in the Grand Canal, the sea formed so effective a way of communication, a substitute for street or alley, that on either side of the *canaletto* the churches rose from the water in this ancient, plebeian quarter, degraded into humble, much frequented mission chapels, bearing upon their surface the stamp of their necessity, of their use by crowds of simple folk, that the gardens crossed by the line of the canal allowed their astonished leaves or fruit to trail in the water and that on the doorstep of the house whose roughly hewn stone was still wrinkled as though it had only just been sawn, little boys surprised by the gondola and keeping their balance allowed their legs to dangle vertically, like sailors seated upon a swing-bridge the two halves of which have been swung apart, allowing the sea to pass between them.

Now and again there appeared a handsomer building that happened to be there, like a surprise in a box which we have just opened, a little ivory temple with its Corin-

thian columns and its allegorical statue on the pediment, somewhat out of place among the ordinary buildings in the midst of which it had survived, and the peristyle with which the canal provided it resembled a landing-stage for market gardeners.

The sun had barely begun to set when I went to fetch my mother from the Piazzetta. We returned up the Grand Canal in our gondola, we watched the double line of palaces between which we passed reflect the light and angle of the sun upon their rosy surfaces, and alter with them, seeming not so much private habitations and historic buildings as a chain of marble cliffs at the foot of which people go out in the evening in a boat to watch the sunset. In this way, the mansions arranged along either bank of the canal made one think of objects of nature, but of a nature which seemed to have created its works with a human imagination. But at the same time (because of the character of the impressions, always urban, which Venice gives us almost in the open sea, upon those waves whose flow and ebb make themselves felt twice daily, and which alternately cover at high tide and uncover at low tide the splendid outside stairs of the palaces), as we should have done in Paris upon the boulevards, in the Champs-Elysées, in the Bois, in any wide thoroughfare that was a fashionable resort, in the powdery evening light, we passed the most beautifully dressed women, almost all foreigners, who, propped luxuriously upon the cushions of their floating vehicle, took their place in the procession, stopped before a palace in which there was a friend whom they wished to see, sent to inquire whether she was at home; and while, as they waited for the answer, they prepared to leave a card, as they

would have done at the door of the Hotel de Guermantes, they turned to their guide-book to find out the period, the style of the palace, not without being shaken, as though upon the crest of a blue wave, by the thrust of the flashing, prancing water, which took alarm on finding itself pent between the dancing gondola and the slapping marble. And thus any excursion, even when it was only to pay calls or to go shopping, was threefold and unique in this Venice where the simplest social coming and going assumed at the same time the form and the charm of a visit to a museum and a trip on the sea.

Several of the palaces on the Grand Canal had been converted into hotels, and, feeling the need of a change, or wishing to be hospitable to Mme. Sazerat whom we had encountered—the unexpected and inopportune acquaintance whom we invariably meet when we travel abroad—and whom Mamma had invited to dine with us, we decided one evening to try an hotel which was not our own, and in which we had been told that the food was better. While my mother was paying the gondolier and taking Mme. Sazerat to the room which she had engaged, I slipped away to inspect the great hall of the restaurant with its fine marble pillars and walls and ceiling that were once entirely covered with frescoes, recently and badly restored. Two waiters were conversing in an Italian which I translate:

"Are the old people going to dine in their room? They never let us know. It's the devil, I never know whether I am to reserve their table (*non so se bisogna conservargli la loro tavola*). And then, suppose they come down and find their table taken! I don't understand how they can

take in *forestieri* like that in such a smart hotel. They're not our style."

Notwithstanding his contempt, the waiter was anxious to know what action he was to take with regard to the table, and was going to get the lift-boy sent upstairs to inquire, when, before he had had time to do so, he received his answer: he had just caught sight of the old lady who was entering the room. I had no difficulty, despite the air of melancholy and weariness that comes with the burden of years, and despite a sort of eczema, a red leprosy that covered her face, in recognising beneath her bonnet, in her black jacket, made by W—, but to the untutored eye exactly like that of an old charwoman, the Marquise de Villeparisis. As luck would have it, the spot upon which I was standing, engaged in studying the remains of a fresco, between two of the beautiful marble panels, was directly behind the table at which Mme. de Villeparisis had just sat down.

"Then M. de Villeparisis won't be long. They've been here a month now, and it's only once that they didn't have a meal together," said the waiter.

I was asking myself who the relative could be with whom she was travelling, and who was named M. de Villeparisis, when I saw, a few moments later, advance towards the table and sit down by her side, her old lover, M. de Norpois.

His great age had weakened the resonance of his voice, but had in compensation given to his language, formerly so reserved, a positive intemperance. The cause of this was to be sought, perhaps, in certain ambitions for the realisation of which little time, he felt, remained to him, and which filled him all the more with vehemence and

ardour; perhaps in the fact that, having been discarded from a world of politics to which he longed to return, he imagined, in the simplicity of his desire, that he could turn out of office, by the pungent criticisms which he launched at them, the men whose places he was anxious to fill. Thus we see politicians convinced that the Cabinet of which they are not members cannot hold out for three days. It would, however, be an exaggeration to suppose that M. de Norpois had entirely lost the traditions of diplomatic speech. Whenever "important matters" were involved, he at once became, as we shall see, the man whom we remember in the past, but at all other times he would inveigh against this man and that with the senile violence of certain octogenarians which hurls them into the arms of women to whom they are no longer capable of doing any serious damage.

Mme. de Villeparisis preserved, for some minutes, the silence of an old woman who in the exhaustion of age finds it difficult to rise from memories of the past to consideration of the present. Then, turning to one of those eminently practical questions that indicate the survival of a mutual affection:

"Did you call at Salviati's?"

"Yes."

"Will they send it to-morrow?"

"I brought the bowl back myself. You shall see it after dinner. Let us look what there is to eat."

"Did you send instructions about my Suez shares?"

"No; at the present moment the market is entirely taken up with oil shares. But there is no hurry, they are still fetching an excellent price. Here is the bill of

fare. First of all, there are red mullets. Shall we try them?"

"For me, yes, but you are not allowed them. Ask for a risotto instead. But they don't know how to cook it."

"That doesn't matter. Waiter, some mullets for Madame and a risotto for me."

A fresh and prolonged silence.

"Why, I brought you the papers, the *Corriere della Sera*, the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, and all the rest of them. Do you know, there is a great deal of talk about a diplomatic change, the first scapegoat in which is to be Paléologue, who is notoriously inadequate in Serbia. He will perhaps be succeeded by Lozé, and there will be a vacancy at Constantinople. "But," M. de Norpois hastened to add in a bitter tone, "for an Embassy of such scope, in a capital where it is obvious that Great Britain must always, whatever may happen, occupy the chief place at the council-table, it would be prudent to turn to men of experience better armed to resist the ambushes of the enemies of our British ally than are diplomats of the modern school who would walk blindfold into the trap." The angry volubility with which M. de Norpois uttered the last words was due principally to the fact that the newspapers, instead of suggesting his name, as he had requested them to do, named as a "hot favourite" a young official of the Foreign Ministry. "Heaven knows that the men of years and experience may well hesitate, as a result of all manner of tortuous manoeuvres, to put themselves forward in the place of more or less incapable recruits. I have known many of these self-styled diplomats of the empirical method who centred all their hopes

in a soap bubble which it did not take me long to burst. There can be no question about it, if the Government is so lacking in wisdom as to entrust the reins of state to turbulent hands, at the call of duty an old conscript will always answer 'Present!' But who knows" (and here M. de Norpois appeared to know perfectly well to whom he was referring) "whether it would not be the same on the day when they came in search of some veteran full of wisdom and skill. To my mind, for everyone has a right to his own opinion, the post at Constantinople should not be accepted until we have settled our existing difficulties with Germany. We owe no man anything, and it is intolerable that every six months they should come and demand from us, by fraudulent machinations, and extort by force and fear, the payment of some debt or other, always hastily offered by a venal press. This must cease, and naturally a man of high distinction who has proved his merit, a man who would have, if I may say so, the Emperor's ear, would wield greater authority than any ordinary person in bringing the conflict to an end."

A gentleman who was finishing his dinner bowed to M. de Norpois.

"Why, there is Prince Foggi," said the Marquis.

"Ah, I'm not sure that I know whom you mean," muttered Mme. de Villeparisis.

"Why, of course you do. It is Prince Odone. The brother-in-law of your cousin Doudeauville. You cannot have forgotten that I went shooting with him at Bonnétable?"

"Ah! Odone, that is the one who went in for painting?"

"Not at all, he's the one who married the Grand Duke N—'s sister."

M. de Norpois uttered these remarks in the cross tone of a schoolmaster who is dissatisfied with his pupil, and stared fixedly at Mme. de Villeparisis out of his blue eyes.

When the Prince had drunk his coffee and was leaving his table, M. de Norpois rose, hastened towards him and with a majestic wave of his arm, himself retiring into the background, presented him to Mme. de Villeparisis. And during the next few minutes while the Prince was standing beside their table, M. de Norpois never ceased for an instant to keep his azure pupils trained on Mme. de Villeparisis, from the weakness or severity of an old lover, principally from fear of her making one of those mistakes in Italian which he had relished but which he dreaded. Whenever she said anything to the Prince that was not quite accurate he corrected her mistake and stared into the eyes of the abashed and docile Marquise with the steady intensity of a hypnotist.

A waiter came to tell me that my mother was waiting for me, I went to her and made my apologies to Mme. Sazerat, saying that I had been interested to see Mme. de Villeparisis. At the sound of this name, Mme. Sazerat turned pale and seemed about to faint. Controlling herself with an effort: "Mme. de Villeparisis, who was Mlle. de Bouillon?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"Couldn't I just get a glimpse of her for a moment? It has been the desire of my life."

"Then there is no time to lose, Madame, for she will soon have finished her dinner. But how do you come to take such an interest in her?"

"Because Mme. de Villeparisis was, before her second marriage, the Duchesse d'Havré, beautiful as an angel, wicked as a demon, who drove my father out of his senses, ruined him and then forsook him immediately. Well, she may have behaved to him like any girl out of the gutter, she may have been the cause of our having to live, my family and myself, in a humble position at Combray; now that my father is dead, my consolation is to think that he was in love with the most beautiful woman of his generation, and as I have never set eyes on her, it will, after all, be a pleasure. . . ."

I escorted Mme. Sazerat, trembling with emotion, to the restaurant and pointed out Mme. de Villeparisis.

But, like a blind person who turns his face in the wrong direction, so Mme. Sazerat did not bring her gaze to rest upon the table at which Mme. de Villeparisis was dining, but, looking towards another part of the room, said:

"But she must have gone, I don't see her in the place you're pointing to."

"And she continued to gaze round the room, in quest of the loathed, adored vision that had haunted her imagination for so long.

"Yes, there she is, at the second table."

"Then we can't be counting from the same point. At what I call the second table there are only two people, an old gentleman and a little hunchbacked, red-faced woman, quite hideous."

"That is she!"

In the mean time, Mme. de Villeparisis having asked M. de Norpois to make Prince Foggi sit down, a friendly conversation followed among the three of them; they discussed politics, the Prince declared that he was not in-

terested in the fate of the Cabinet and would spend another week at least at Venice. He hoped that in the interval all risk of a ministerial crisis would have been obviated. Prince Foggi supposed for a moment that these political topics did not interest M. de Norpois, for the latter who until then had been expressing himself with such vehemence had become suddenly absorbed in an almost angelic silence which he seemed capable of breaking, should his voice return, only by singing some innocent melody by Mendelssohn or César Franck. The Prince supposed also that this silence was due to the reserve of a Frenchman who naturally would not wish to discuss Italian affairs in the presence of an Italian. Now in this, the Prince was completely mistaken. Silence, an air of indifference were, in M. de Norpois, not a sign of reserve but the regular prelude to an intervention in important affairs. The Marquis had his eye upon nothing less (as we have seen) than Constantinople, with a preliminary settlement of the German question, with a view to which he hoped to force the hand of the Rome Cabinet. He considered, in fact, that an action on his part of international range might be the worthy crown of his career, perhaps even an avenue to fresh honours, to difficult tasks to which he had not relinquished his pretensions. For old age makes us incapable of performing our duties but not, at first, of desiring them. It is only in a third period that those who live to a very great age have relinquished desire, as they have had already to forego action. They no longer present themselves as candidates at futile elections which they tried so often to win, the Presidential election, for instance. They content themselves with tak-

ing the air, eating, reading the newspapers, they have outlived themselves.

The Prince, to put the Marquis at his ease and to shew him that he regarded him as a compatriot, began to speak of the possible successors to the Prime Minister then in office. A successor who would have a difficult task before him. When Prince Foggi had mentioned more than twenty names of politicians who seemed to him suitable for office, names to which the ex-ambassador listened with his eyelids drooping over his blue eyes and without moving a muscle, M. de Norpois broke his silence at length to utter those words which were for a score of years to supply the Chanceries with food for conversation, and afterwards, when they had been forgotten, would be exhumed by some personage signing himself "One Who Knows" or "Testis" or "Machiavelli" in a newspaper in which the very oblivion into which they had fallen entitled them to create a fresh sensation. As I say, Prince Foggi had mentioned more than tweny names to the diplomat who remained as motionless and mute as though he were stone deaf when M. de Norpois raised his head slightly, and, in the form that had been assumed by those of his diplomatic interventions which had had the most far-reaching consequences, albeit this time with greater audacity and less brevity, asked shrewdly: "And has no one mentioned the name of Signor Giolitti?" At these words the scales fell from Prince Foggi's eyes; he could hear a celestial murmur. Then at once M. de Norpois began to speak about one thing and another, no longer afraid to make a sound, as, when the last note of a sublime aria by Bach has been played, the audience are no longer afraid to talk aloud, to call for their hats and

coats in the cloakroom. He made the difference even more marked by begging the Prince to pay his most humble respects to Their Majesties the King and Queen when next he should see them, a phrase of dismissal which corresponds to the shout for a coachman at the end of a concert: "Auguste, from the Rue de Belloy." We cannot say what exactly were Prince Foggi's impressions, He must certainly have been delighted to have heard the gem: "And Signor Giolitti, has no one mentioned his name?" For M. de Norpois, in whom age had destroyed or deranged his most outstanding qualities, had on the other hand, as he grew older, perfected his bravura, as certain aged musicians, who in all other respects have declined, acquire and retain until the end, in the matter of chamber-music, a perfect virtuosity which they did not formerly possess.

However that may be, Prince Foggi, who had intended to spend a fortnight in Venice returned to Rome that very night and was received a few days later in audience by the King in connexion with the property which, as we may perhaps have mentioned already, the Prince owned in Sicily. The Cabinet hung on for longer than could have been expected. When it fell, the King consulted various statesmen as to the most suitable head of the new Cabinet. Then he sent for Signor Giolitti who accepted. Three months later a newspaper reported Prince Foggi's meeting with M. de Norpois. The conversation was reported as we have given it here, with the difference that, instead of: "M. de Norpois asked shrewdly," one read: "M. de Norpois said with that shrewd and charming smile which is so characteristic of him." M. de Norpois considered that "shrewdly" had

in itself sufficient explosive force for a diplomat and that this addition was, to say the least, untimely. He had even asked the Quai d'Orsay to issue an official contradiction, but the Quai d'Orsay did not know which way to turn. As a matter of fact, ever since the conversation had been made public, M. Barrère had been telegraphing several times hourly to Paris, pointing out that there was already an accredited Ambassador at the Quirinal and describing the indignation with which the incident had been received throughout the whole of Europe. This indignation was non-existent, but the other Ambassadors were too polite to contradict M. Barrère when he assured them that there could be no question about everybody's being furious. M. Barrère, listening only to his own thoughts, mistook this courteous silence for assent. Immediately he telegraphed to Paris: "I have just had an hour's conversation with the Marchese Visconti-Venosta," and so forth. His secretaries were worn to skin and bone.

M. de Norpois, however, could count upon the devotion of a French newspaper of very long standing, which indeed in 1870, when he was French Minister in a German capital, had rendered him an important service. This paper (especially its leading article, which was unsigned) was admirably written. But the paper became a thousand times more interesting when this leading article (styled "premier-Paris" in those far off days and now, no one knows why, "editorial") was on the contrary badly expressed, with endless repetitions of words. Everyone felt then, with emotion, that the article had been "inspired." Perhaps by M. de Norpois, perhaps by some other leading man of the hour. To give an anticipatory idea of the Italian incident, let us shew how

M. de Norpois made use of this paper in 1870, to no purpose, it may be thought, since war broke out nevertheless—most efficaciously, according to M. de Norpois, whose axiom was that we ought first and foremost to prepare public opinion. His articles, every word in which was weighed, resembled those optimistic bulletins which are at once followed by the death of the patient. For instance, on the eve of the declaration of war, in 1870, when mobilisation was almost complete, M. de Norpois (remaining, of course, in the background) had felt it to be his duty to send to this famous newspaper the following "editorial":

"The opinion seems to prevail in authoritative circles, that since the afternoon hours of yesterday, the situation, without of course being of an alarming nature, might well be envisaged as serious and even, from certain angles, as susceptible of being regarded as critical. M. le Marquis de Norpois would appear to have held several conversations with the Prussian Minister, in order to examine in a firm and conciliatory spirit, and in a wholly concrete fashion, the different causes of friction that, if we may say so, exist. Unfortunately, we have not yet heard, at the hour of going to press, that Their Excellencies have been able to agree upon a formula that may serve as base for a diplomatic instrument."

Latest intelligence: "We have learned with satisfaction in well-informed circles that a slight slackening of tension appears to have occurred in Franco-Prussian relations. We may attach a specially distinct importance to the fact that M. de Norpois is reported to have met the British Minister 'unter den Linden' and to have conversed with him for fully twenty minutes. This report is re-

garded as highly satisfactory." (There was added, in brackets, after the word "satisfactory" its German equivalent "*befriedigend*".) And on the following day one read in the editorial: "It would appear that, notwithstanding all the dexterity of M. de Norpois, to whom everyone must hasten to render homage for the skill and energy with which he has managed to defend the inalienable rights of France, a rupture is now, so to speak, virtually inevitable."

The newspaper could not refrain from following an editorial couched in this vein with a selection of comments, furnished of course by M. de Norpois. The reader may perhaps have observed in these last pages that the "conditional mood" was one of the Ambassador's favourite grammatical forms, in the literature of diplomacy. ("One would attach a special importance" for "it appears that people attach a special importance.") But the "present indicative" employed not in its regular sense but in that of the old "optative" was no less dear to M. de Norpois. The comments that followed the editorial were as follows:

"Never have the public shewn themselves so admirably calm" (M. de Norpois would have liked to believe that this was true but feared that it was precisely the opposite of the truth). "They are weary of fruitless agitation and have learned with satisfaction that His Majesty's Government would assume their responsibilities according to the eventualities that might occur. The public ask" (optative) "nothing more." To their splendid coolness, which is in itself a token of victory, we shall add a piece of intelligence amply qualified to reassure public opinion, were there any need of that. We are, indeed, assured

that M. de Norpois who, for reasons of health, was ordered long ago to return to Paris for medical treatment, would appear to have left Berlin where he considered that his presence no longer served any purpose.

Latest intelligence: His Majesty the Emperor left Compiègne this morning for Paris in order to confer with the Marquis de Norpois, the Minister for War and Marshal Bazaine upon whom public opinion relies with absolute confidence. H. M. the Emperor has cancelled the banquet which he was about to give for his sister-in-law the Duchess of Alba. This action created everywhere, as soon as it became known, a particularly favourable impression. The Emperor has held a review of his troops whose enthusiasm is indescribable. Several Corps, by virtue of a mobilisation order issued immediately upon the Sovereign's arrival in Paris, are, in any contingency, ready to move in the direction of the Rhine.

Sometimes at dusk as I returned to the hotel I felt that the Albertine of long ago invisible to my eyes was nevertheless enclosed within me as in the dungeons of an internal Venice, the solid walls of which some incident occasionally slid apart so as to give me a glimpse of that past.

Thus for instance one evening a letter from my stockbroker reopened for me for an instant the gates of the prison in which Albertine abode within me alive, but so remote, so profoundly buried that she remained inaccessible to me. Since her death I had ceased to take any interest in the speculations that I had made in order to have more money for her. But time had passed; the wisest judgments of the previous generation had been proved unwise by this generation, as had occurred in the past to M. Thiers who had said that railways could never prove successful. The stocks of which M. de Norpois had said to us: "even if your income from them is nothing very great, you may be certain of never losing any of your capital," were, more often than not, those which had declined most in value. Calls had been made upon me for considerable sums and in a rash moment I decided to sell out everything and found that I now possessed barely a fifth of the fortune that I had had when Albertine was alive. This became known at Combray among the survivors of our family circle and their friends, and, as they knew that I went about with the Marquis de Saint-Loup and the Guermantes family, they said to themselves: "Pride goes before a fall!" They would have been greatly astonished to learn that it was for a girl of Albertine's humble position that I had made these speculations. Besides, in that Combray world in which everyone

is classified for ever according to the income that he is known to enjoy, as in an Indian caste, it would have been impossible for anyone to form any idea of the great freedom that prevailed in the world of the Guermantes where people attached no importance to wealth, and where poverty was regarded as being as disagreeable, but no more degrading, as having no more effect on a person's social position than would a stomach-ache. Doubtless they imagined, on the contrary, at Combray that Saint-Loup and M. de Guermantes must be ruined aristocrats, whose estates were mortgaged, to whom I had been lending money, whereas if I had been ruined they would have been the first to offer in all sincerity to come to my assistance. As for my comparative penury, it was all the more awkward at the moment inasmuch as my Venetian interests had been concentrated for some little time past on a rosy-cheeked young glass-vendor who offered to the delighted eye a whole range of orange tones and filled me with such a longing to see her again daily that, feeling that my mother and I would soon be leaving Venice, I had made up my mind that I would try to create some sort of position for her in Paris which would save me the distress of parting from her. The beauty of her seventeen summers was so noble, so radiant, that it was like acquiring a genuine Titian before leaving the place. And would the scant remains of my fortune be sufficient temptation to her to make her leave her native land and come to live in Paris for my sole convenience? But as I came to the end of the stockbroker's letter, a passage in which he said: "I shall look after your credits" reminded me of a scarcely less hypocritically professional expression which the bath-attendant at Balbec had used in speaking

to Aimé of Albertine. "It was I that looked after her," she had said, and these words which had never again entered my mind acted like an "Open, sesame!" upon the hinges of the prison door. But a moment later the door closed once more upon the immured victim—whom I was not to blame for not wishing to join, since I was no longer able to see her, to call her to mind, and since other people exist for us only to the extent of the idea that we retain of them—who had for an instant seemed to me so touching because of my desertion of her, albeit she was unaware of it, that I had for the duration of a lightning-flash thought with longing of the time, already remote, when I used to suffer night and day from the companionship of her memory. Another time at San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, an eagle accompanying one of the Apostles and conventionalised in the same manner revived the memory and almost the suffering caused by the two rings the similarity of which Françoise had revealed to me, and as to which I had never learned who had given them to Albertine. Finally, one evening, an incident occurred of such a nature that it seemed as though my love must revive. No sooner had our gondola stopped at the hotel steps than the porter handed me a telegram which the messenger had already brought three times to the hotel, for owing to the inaccurate rendering of the recipient's name (which I recognised nevertheless, through the corruptions introduced by Italian clerks, as my own) the post-office required a signed receipt certifying that the telegram was addressed to myself. I opened it as soon as I was in my own room, and, as I cast my eye over the sheet covered with inaccurately transmitted words, managed nevertheless to make out:

"My dear, you think me dead, forgive me, I am quite alive, should like to see you, talk about marriage, when do you return? Love. Albertine." Then there occured in me in inverse order a process parallel to that which had occurred in the case of my grandmother: when I had learned the fact of my grandmother's death, I had not at first felt any grief. And I had been really grieved by her death only when spontaneous memories had made her seem to me to be once again alive. Now that Albertine was no longer alive for me in my mind, the news that she was alive did not cause me the joy that I might have expected. Albertine had been nothing more to me than a bundle of thoughts, she had survived her bodily death so long as those thoughts were alive in me; on the other hand, now that those thoughts were dead, Albertine did not in any way revive for me, in her bodily form. And when I realised that I felt no joy at the thought of her being alive, that I no longer loved her, I ought to have been more astounded than a person who, looking at his reflexion in the glass, after months of travel, or of sickness, discovers that he has white hair and a different face, that of a middle-aged or an old man. This appals us because its message is: "the man that I was, the fair young man no longer exists, I am another person." And yet, was not the impression that I now felt the proof of as profound a change, as total a death of my former self and of the no less complete substitution of a new self for that former self, as is proved by the sight of a wrinkled face capped with a snowy poll instead of the face of long ago? But we are no more disturbed by the fact of our having become another person, after a lapse of years and in the natural order of events, than

we are disturbed at any given moment by the fact of our being, one after another, the incompatible persons, crafty, sensitive, refined, coarse, disinterested, ambitious which we are, in turn, every day of our life. And the reason why this does not disturb us is the same, namely that the self which has been eclipsed—momentarily in this latter case and when it is a question of character, permanently in the former case and when it is a matter of passions—is not present to deplore the other, the other which is for the moment, or for all time, our whole self; the coarse self laughs at his own coarseness, for he is a coarse person, and the forgetful man does not worry about his loss of memory, simply because he has forgotten.

I should have been incapable of resuscitating Albertine because I was incapable of resuscitating myself, of resuscitating the self of those days. Life, according to its habit which is, by incessant, infinitesimal labours, to change the face of the world, had not said to me on the morrow of Albertine's death: "Become another person," but, by changes too imperceptible for me to be conscious even that I was changing, had altered almost every element in me, with the result that my mind was already accustomed to its new master—my new self—when it became aware that it had changed; it was upon this new master that it depended. My affection for Albertine, my jealousy depended, as we have seen, upon the irradiation by the association of ideas of certain pleasant or painful impressions, upon the memory of Mlle. Vinteuil at Montjouvain, upon the precious good-night kisses that Albertine used to bestow on my throat. But in proportion as these impressions had grown fainter, the vast field of impressions which they coloured with a hue that was

agonising or soothing began to resume its neutral tint. As soon as oblivion had taken hold of certain dominant points of suffering and pleasure, the resistance offered by my love was overcome, I was no longer in love with Albertine. I tried to recall her image to my mind. I had been right in my presentiment when, a couple of days after Albertine's flight, I was appalled by the discovery that I had been able to live for forty-eight hours without her. It had been the same thing when I wrote to Gilberte long ago saying to myself: "If this goes on for a year or two, I shall no longer be in love with her." And if, when Swann asked me to come and see Gilberte again, this had seemed to me as embarrassing as greeting a dead woman, in Albertine's case death—or what I had supposed to be death—had achieved the same result as a prolonged rupture in Gilberte's. Death acts only in the same way as absence. The monster at whose apparition my love had trembled, oblivion, had indeed, as I had feared, ended by devouring that love. Not only did the news that she was alive fail to revive my love, not only did it allow me to realise how far I had already proceeded on the way towards indifference, it at once and so abruptly accelerated that process that I asked myself whether in the past the converse report that of Albertine's death, had not in like manner, by completing the effect of her departure, exalted my love and delayed its decline. And now that the knowledge that she was alive and the possibility of our reunion made her all of a sudden so worthless in my sight, I asked myself whether Françoise's insinuations, our rupture itself, and even her death (imaginary, but supposed to be true) had not prolonged my love, so true is it that the efforts of third per-

sons and even those of fate, in separating us from a woman, succeed only in attaching us to her. Now it was the contrary process that had occurred. Anyhow, I tried to recall her image and perhaps because I had only to raise my finger to have her once more to myself, the memory that came to me was that of a very stout, masculine girl from whose colourless face protruded already, like a sprouting seed, the profile of Mme. Bontemps. What she might or might not have done with Andrée or with other girls no longer interested me. I no longer suffered from the malady which I had so long thought to be incurable and really I might have foreseen this. Certainly, regret for a lost mistress, jealousy that survives her death are physical maladies fully as much as tuberculosis or leucaemia. And yet among physical maladies it is possible to distinguish those which are caused by a purely physical agency, and those which act upon the body only through the channel of the mind. If the part of the mind which serves as carrier is the memory,—that is to say if the cause is obliterated or remote—however agonising the pain, however profound the disturbance to the organism may appear to be, it is very seldom (the mind having a capacity for renewal or rather an incapacity for conservation which the tissues lack) that the prognosis is not favourable. At the end of a given period after which a man who has been attacked by cancer will be dead, it is very seldom that the grief of an inconsolable widower or father is not healed. Mine was healed. Was it for this girl whom I saw in my mind's eye so fleshy and who had certainly grown older as the girls whom she had loved had grown older, was it for her that I must renounce the dazzling girl who

was my memory of yesterday, my hope for to-morrow (to whom I could give nothing, any more than to any other, if I married Albertine), renounce that new Albertine not "such as hell had beheld her" but faithful, and "indeed a trifle shy"? It was she who was now what Albertine had been in the past: my love for Albertine had been but a transitory form of my devotion to girlhood. We think that we are in love with a girl, whereas we love in her, alas! only that dawn the glow of which is momentarily reflected on her face. The night passed. In the morning I gave the telegram back to the hotel porter explaining that it had been brought to me by mistake and that it was not addressed to me. He told me that now that it had been opened he might get into trouble, that it would be better if I kept it; I put it back in my pocket, but determined that I would act as though I had never received it. I had definitely ceased to love Albertine. So that this love after departing so widely from the course that I had anticipated, when I remembered my love for Gilberte, after obliging me to make so long and painful a detour, itself too ended, after furnishing an exception, by merging itself, just like my love for Gilberte, in the general rule of oblivion.

But then I reflected: I used to value Albertine more than myself; I no longer value her now because for a certain time past I have ceased to see her. But my desire not to be parted from myself by death, to rise again after my death, this desire was not like the desire never to be parted from Albertine, it still persisted. Was this due to the fact that I valued myself more highly than her, that when I was in love with her I loved myself even more? No, it was because, having ceased to see her,

I had ceased to love her, whereas I had not ceased to love myself because my everyday attachments to myself had not been severed like my attachments to Albertine. But if the attachments to my body, to my self were severed also . . . ? Obviously, it would be the same. Our love of life is only an old connexion of which we do not know how to rid ourself. Its strength lies in its permanence. But death which severs it will cure us of the desire for immortality.

After luncheon, when I was not going to roam about Venice by myself, I went up to my room to get ready to go out with my mother. In the abrupt angles of the walls I could read the restrictions imposed by the sea, the parcimony of the soil. And when I went downstairs to join Mamma who was waiting for me, at that hour when, at Combray, it was so pleasant to feel the sun quite close at hand, in the darkness guarded by closed shutters, here, from top to bottom of the marble staircase as to which one knew no better than in a Renaissance picture, whether it was built in a palace or upon a galley, the same coolness and the same feeling of the splendour of the scene outside were imparted, thanks to the awning which stirred outside the ever-open windows through which, upon an incessant stream of air, the cool shade and the greenish sunlight moved as though over a liquid surface and suggested the weltering proximity, the glitter, the mirroring instability of the sea.

After dinner, I went out by myself, into the heart of the enchanted city where I found myself wandering in strange regions like a character in the Arabian Nights. It was very seldom that I did not, in the course of my

wanderings, hit upon some strange and spacious piazza of which no guide-book, no tourist had ever told me.

I had plunged into a network of little alleys, *calli* dissecting in all directions by their ramifications the quarter of Venice isolated between a canal and the lagoon, as if it had crystallised along these innumerable, slender, capillary lines. All of a sudden, at the end of one of these little streets, it seemed as though a bubble had occurred in the crystallised matter. A vast and splendid *campo* of which I could certainly never, in this network of little streets, have guessed the importance, or even found room for it, spread out before me flanked with charming palaces silvery in the moonlight. It was one of those architectural wholes towards which, in any other town, the streets converge, lead you and point the way. Here it seemed to be deliberately concealed in a labyrinth of alleys, like those palaces in oriental tales to which mysterious agents convey by night a person who, taken home again before daybreak, can never again find his way back to the magic dwelling which he ends by supposing that he visited only in a dream.

On the following day I set out in quest of my beautiful nocturnal *piazza*, I followed *calli* which were exactly alike one another and refused to give me any information, except such as would lead me farther astray. Sometimes a vague landmark which I seemed to recognise led me to suppose that I was about to see appear, in its seclusion, solitude and silence, the beautiful exiled *piazza*. At that moment, some evil genie which had assumed the form of a fresh *calle* made me turn unconsciously from my course, and I found myself suddenly brought back to the Grand Canal. And as there is no great difference

between the memory of a dream and the memory of a reality, I ended by asking myself whether it was not during my sleep that there had occurred in a dark patch of Venetian crystallisation that strange interruption which offered a vast *piazza* flanked by romantic palaces, to the meditative eye of the moon.

On the day before our departure, we decided to go so far afield as Padua where were to be found those Vices and Virtues of which Swann had given me reproductions; after walking in the glare of the sun across the garden of the Arena, I entered the Giotto chapel the entire ceiling of which and the background of the frescoes are so blue that it seems as though the radiant day has crossed the threshold with the human visitor, and has come in for a moment to stow away in the shade and coolness its pure sky, of a slightly deeper blue now that it is rid of the sun's gilding, as in those brief spells of respite that interrupt the finest days, when, without our having noticed any cloud, the sun having turned his gaze elsewhere for a moment, the azure, more exquisite still, grows deeper. In this sky, upon the blue-washed stone, angels were flying with so intense a celestial, or at least an infantile ardour, that they seemed to be birds of a peculiar species that had really existed, that must have figured in the natural history of biblical and Apostolic times, birds that never fail to fly before the saints when they walk abroad; there are always some to be seen fluttering above them, and as they are real creatures with a genuine power of flight, we see them soar upwards, describe curves, "loop the loop" without the slightest difficulty, plunge towards the earth head downwards with the aid of wings which enable them to support themselves

in positions that defy the law of gravitation, and they remind us far more of a variety of bird or of young pupils of Garros practising the *vol-plané,* than of the angels of the art of the Renaissance and later periods whose wings have become nothing more than emblems and whose attitude is generally the same as that of heavenly beings who are not winged.

When I heard, on the very day upon which we were due to start for Paris, that Mme. Putbus, and consequently her maid, hard just arrived in Venice, I asked my mother to put off our departure for a few days; her air of not taking my request into consideration, of not even listening to it seriously, reawakened in my nerves, excited by the Venetian springtime, that old desire to rebel against an imaginary plot woven against me by my parents (who imagined that I would be forced to obey them), that fighting spirit, that desire which drove me in the past to enforce my wishes upon the people whom I loved best in the world, prepared to conform to their wishes after I had succeeded in making them yield. I told my mother that I would not leave Venice, but she, thinking it more to her purpose not to appear to believe that I was saying this seriously, did not even answer. I went on to say that she would soon see whether I was serious or not. And when the hour came at which, accompanied by all my luggage, she set off for the station, I ordered a cool drink to be brought out to me on the terrace overlooking the canal, and installed myself there, watching the sunset, while from a boat that had stopped in front of the hotel a musician sang " sole mio."

The sun continued to sink. My mother must be nearing the station. Presently, she would be gone, I should be left alone in Venice, alone with the misery of knowing that I had distressed her, and without her presence to comfort me. The hour of the train approached. My irrevocable solitude was so near at hand that it seemed to me to have begun already and to be complete. For I felt myself to be alone. Things had become alien to me. I was no longer calm enough to draw from my

throbbing heart and introduce into them a measure of stability. The town that I saw before me had ceased to be Venice. Its personality, its name, seemed to me to be lying fictions which I no longer had the courage to impress upon its stones. I saw the palaces reduced to their constituent parts, lifeless heaps of marble with nothing to choose between them, and the water as a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, eternal, blind, anterior and exterior to Venice, unconscious of Doges or of Turner. And yet this unremarkable place was as strange as a place at which we have just arrived, which does not yet know us—as a place which we have left and which has forgotten us already. I could not tell it anything more about myself, I could leave nothing of myself imprinted upon it, it left me diminished, I was nothing more than a heart that throbbed, and an attention strained to follow the development of "sole mio." In vain might I fix my mind despairingly upon the beautiful and characteristic arch of the Rialto, it seemed to me, with the mediocrity of the obvious, a bridge not merely inferior to but as different from the idea that I possessed of it as an actor with regard to whom, notwithstanding his fair wig and black garments, we know quite well that in his essential quality he is not Hamlet. So the palaces, the canal, the Rialto became divested of the idea that created their individuality and disintegrated into their common material elements. But at the same time this mediocre place seemed to me remote. In the basin of the arsenal, because of an element which itself also was scientific, namely latitude, there was that singularity in things which, even when similar in appearance to those of our own land, reveal that they are aliens, in exile

beneath a foreign sky; I felt that that horizon so close at hand, which I could have reached in an hour, was a curve of the earth quite different from those made by the seas of France, a remote curve which, by the accident of travel, happened to be moored close to where I was; so that this arsenal basin, at once insignificant and remote, filled me with that blend of disgust and alarm which I had felt as a child when I first accompanied my mother to the Deligny baths; indeed in that fantastic place consisting of a dark water reflecting neither sky nor sun, which nevertheless amid its fringe of cabins one felt to be in communication with invisible depths crowded with human bodies in bathing dresses, I had asked myself whether those depths, concealed from mortal eyes by a row of cabins which prevented anyone in the street from suspecting that they existed, were not the entry to arctic seas which began at that point, whether the Poles were not comprised in them and whether that narrow space was not indeed the open water that surrounds the Pole. This Venice without attraction for myself in which I was going to be left alone, seemed to me no less isolated, no less unreal, and it was my distress which the sound of "sole mio," rising like a dirge for the Venice that I had known, seemed to be calling to witness. No doubt I ought to have ceased to listen to it if I wished to be able to overtake my mother and to join her on the train, I ought to have made up my mind without wasting another instant that I was going, but this is just what I was powerless to do; I remained motionless, incapable not merely of rising, but even of deciding that I would rise from my chair.

My mind, doubtless in order not to have to consider

the question of making a resolution, was entirely occupied in following the course of the successive lines of "sole mio," singing them mentally with the singer, in anticipating for each of them the burst of melody that would carry it aloft, in letting myself soar with it, and fall to earth again with it afterwards.

No doubt this trivial song which I had heard a hundred times did not interest me in the least degree. I could afford no pleasure to anyone else, or to myself, by listening to it religiously like this to the end. In fact, none of the elements, familiar beforehand, of this popular ditty was capable of furnishing me with the resolution of which I stood in need; what was more, each of these phrases when it came and passed in its turn, became an obstacle in the way of my making that resolution effective, or rather it forced me to adopt the contrary resolution not to leave Venice, for it made me too late for the train. Wherefore this occupation, devoid of any pleasure in itself, of listening to "sole mio," was charged with a profound, almost despairing melancholy. I knew very well that in reality it was the resolution not to go that I had adopted by the mere act of remaining where I was; but to say to myself: "I am not going," a speech which in that direct form was impossible, became possible in this indirect form: "I am going to listen to one more line of 'sole mio'; " but the practical significance of this figurative language did not escape me and, while I said to myself: "After all, I am only listening to another line," I knew that the words meant: "I shall remain by myself at Venice." And it was perhaps this melancholy, like a sort of numbing cold, that constituted the desperate but fascinating charm of the song. Each note that the

singer's voice uttered with a force and ostentation that were almost muscular came and pierced my heart; when he had uttered his last flourish and the song seemed to be at an end, the singer had not had enough and repeated it an octave higher as though he needed to proclaim once again my solitude and despair.

My mother must by now have reached the station. In a little while she would be gone. My heart was wrung by the anguish that was caused me by—with the view of the Canal that had become quite tiny now that the soul of Venice had escaped from it, of that commonplace Rialto which was no longer the Rialto,—the wail of despair that "sole mio" had become, which, declaimed thus before the unsubstantial palaces, reduced them to dust and ashes and completed the ruin of Venice; I looked on at the slow realisation of my misery built up artistically, without haste, note by note, by the singer as he stood beneath the astonished gaze of the sun arrested in its course beyond San Giorgio Maggiore,[1] with the result that the fading light was to combine for ever in my memory with the throb of my emotion and the bronze voice of the singer in a dubious, unalterable and poignant alloy.

Thus I remained motionless with a disintegrated willpower, with no apparent decision; doubtless at such moments our decision has already been made: our friends can often predict it themselves. But we, we are unable to do so, otherwise how much suffering would we be spared!

But at length, from caverns darker than that from

[1] The geography of this chapter is confusing, but it is evident that Proust has transferred the name of San Giorgio Maggiore to one of the churches on the Grand Canal. Compare also page 288.

which flashes the comet which we can predict,—thanks to the unimaginable defensive force of inveterate habit, thanks to the hidden reserves which by a sudden impulse habit hurls at the last moment into the fray—my activity was roused at length; I set out in hot haste and arrived, when the carriage doors were already shut, but in time to find my mother flushed with emotion, overcome by the effort to restrain her tears, for she thought that I was not coming. Then the train started and we saw Padua and Verona come to meet us, to speed us on our way, almost on to the platforms of their stations, and, when we had drawn away from them, return—they who were not travelling and were about to resume their normal life —one to its plain the other to its hill.

The hours went by. My mother was in no hurry to read two letters which she had in her hand and had merely opened, and tried to prevent me from pulling out my pocket-book at once so as to take from it the letter which the hotel porter had given me. My mother was always afraid of my finding journeys too long, too tiring, and put off as long as possible, so as to keep me occupied during the final hours, the moment at which she would seek fresh distractions for me, bring out the hard-boiled eggs, hand me newspapers, untie the parcel of books which she had bought without telling me. We had long passed Milan when she decided to read the first of her two letters. I began by watching my mother who sat reading it with an air of astonishment, then raised her head, and her eyes seemed to come to rest upon a succession of distinct, incompatible memories, which she could not succeed in bringing together. Meanwhile I had recognised Gilberte's hand on the envelope which I had

just taken from my pocket-book. I opened it. Gilberte wrote to inform me that she was marrying Robert de Saint-Loup. She told me that she had sent me a telegram about it to Venice but had had no reply. I remembered that I had been told that the telegraphic service there was inefficient, I had never received her telegram. Perhaps, she would refuse to believe this. All of a sudden, I felt in my brain a fact which had installed itself there in the guise of a memory leave its place which it surrendered to another fact. The telegram that I had received a few days earlier, and had supposed to be from Albertine, was from Gilberte. As the somewhat laboured originality of Gilberte's handwriting consisted chiefly, when she wrote one line, in introducing into the line above the strokes of her *t*s which appeared to be underlining the words, or the dots over her *i*s which appeared to be punctuating the sentence above them, and on the other hand in interspersing the line below with the tails and flourishes of the words immediately above it, it was quite natural that the clerk who dispatched the telegram should have read the tail of an *s* or *z* in the line above as an "-ine" attached to the word "Gilberte." The dot over the *i* of Gilberte had risen above the word to mark the end of the message. As for her capital *G*, it resembled a gothic *A*. Add that, apart from this, two or three words had been misread, dovetailed into one another (some of them as it happened had seemed to me incomprehensible), and this was quite enough to explain the details of my error and was not even necessary. How many letters are actually read into a word by a careless person who knows what to expect, who sets out with the idea that the message is from a certain person, how many words

into the sentence? We guess as we read, we create; everything starts from an initial mistake; the mistakes that follow (and not only in the reading of letters and telegrams, not only in reading as a whole), extraordinary as they may appear to a person who has not begun at the same starting-point, are all quite natural. A large part of what we believe to be true (and this applies even to our final conclusions) with a persistence equalled only by our sincerity, springs from an original misconception of our premisses.

CHAPTER IV

A fresh light upon Robert de Saint-Loup

"OH, it is unheard-of," said my mother. "Listen, at my age, one has ceased to be astonished at anything, but I assure you that there could be nothing more unexpected than what I find in this letter." "Listen, first, to me," I replied, "I don't know what it is, but however astonishing it may be, it cannot be quite so astonishing as what I have found in my letter. It is a marriage. It is Robert de Saint-Loup who is marrying Gilberte Swann." "Ah!" said my mother, "then that is no doubt what is in the other letter, which I have not yet opened, for I recognised your friend's hand." And my mother smiled at me with that faint trace of emotion which, ever since she had lost her own mother, she felt at every event however insignificant, that concerned human creatures who were capable of grief, of memory, and who themselves also mourned their dead. And so my mother smiled at me and spoke to me in a gentle voice, as though she had been afraid, were she to treat this marriage lightly, of belittling the melancholy feelings that it might arouse in Swann's widow and daughter, in Robert's mother who had resigned herself to parting from her son, all of whom my mother, in her kindness of heart, in her gratitude for their kindness to me, endowed with her own faculty of filial, conjugal and maternal emotion. "Was I right in telling you that you would find nothing

more astonishing?" I asked her. "On the contrary!" she replied in a gentle tone, "it is I who can impart the most extraordinary news, I shall not say the greatest, the smallest, for that quotation from Sévigné which everyone makes who knows nothing else that she ever wrote used to distress your grandmother as much as 'what a charming thing it is to smoke.' We scorn to pick up such stereotyped Sévigné. This letter is to announce the marriage of the Cambremer boy." "Oh!" I remarked with indifference, "to whom? But in any case the personality of the bridegroom robs this marriage of any sensational element." "Unless the bride's personality supplies it." "And who is the bride in question?" "Ah, if I tell you straight away, that will spoil everything; see if you can guess," said my mother who, seeing that we had not yet reached Turin, wished to keep something in reserve for me as meat and drink for the rest of the journey. "But how do you expect me to know? Is it anyone brilliant? If Legrandin and his sister are satisfied, we may be sure that it is a brilliant marriage." "As for Legrandin, I cannot say, but the person who informs me of the marriage says that Mme. de Cambremer is delighted. I don't know whether you will call it a brilliant marriage. To my mind, it suggests the days when kings used to marry shepherdesses, though in this case the shepherdess is even humbler than a shepherdess, charming as she is. It would have stupefied your grandmother, but would not have shocked her." "But who in the world is this bride?" "It is Mlle. d'Oloron." "That sounds to me tremendous and not in the least shepherdessy, but I don't quite gather who she can be. It is a title that used to be in the Guermantes family." "Precisely, and M. de

Charlus conferred it, when he adopted her, upon Jupien's niece." "Jupien's niece! It isn't possible!" "It is the reward of virtue. It is a marriage from the last chapter of one of Mme. Sand's novels," said my mother. "It is the reward of vice, it is a marriage from the end of a Balzac novel," thought I. "After all," I said to my mother, "when you come to think of it, it is quite natural. Here are the Cambremers established in that Guermantes clan among which they never hoped to pitch their tent; what is more, the girl, adopted by M. de Charlus, will have plenty of money, which was indispensable now that the Cambremers have lost theirs; and after all she is the adopted daughter, and, in the Cambremer's eyes, probably the real daughter—the natural daughter—of a person whom they regard as a Prince of the Blood Royal. A bastard of a semi-royal house has always been regarded as a flattering alliance by the nobility of France and other countries. Indeed, without going so far back, only the other day, not more than six months ago, don't you remember, the marriage of Robert's friend and that girl, the only possible justification of which was that she was supposed, rightly or wrongly, to be the natural daughter of a sovereign prince." My mother, without abandoning the caste system of Combray which meant that my grandmother would have been scandalised by such a marriage, being principally anxious to echo her mother's judgment, added: "Anyhow, the girl is worth her weight in gold, and your dear grandmother would not have had to draw upon her immense goodness, her unbounded indulgence, to keep her from condemning young Cambremer's choice. Do you remember how distinguished she thought the girl, years ago, one day when she went into the shop to have

a stitch put in her skirt? She was only a child then. And now, even if she has rather run to seed, and become an old maid, she is a different woman, a thousand times more perfect. But your grandmother saw all that at a glance. She found the little niece of a jobbing tailor more 'noble' than the Duc de Guermantes." But even more necessary than to extol my grandmother was it for my mother to decide that it was "better" for her that she had not lived to see the day. This was the supreme triumph of her filial devotion, as though she were sparing my grandmother a final grief. "And yet, can you imagine for a moment," my mother said to me, "what old father Swann—not that you ever knew him, of course—would have felt if he could have known that he would one day have a great-grandchild in whose veins the blood of mother Moser who used to say: "Ponchour Mezieurs" would mingle with the blood of the Duc de Guise!" "But listen, Mamma, it is a great deal more surprising than that. For the Swanns were very respectable people, and, given the position that their son occupied, his daughter, if he himself had made a decent marriage, might have married very well indeed. But all her chances were ruined by his marrying a courtesan." "Oh, a courtesan, you know, people were perhaps rather hard on her, I never quite believed." "Yes, a courtesan, indeed I can let you have some startling revelations one of these days." Lost in meditation, my mother said: "The daughter of a woman to whom your father would never allow me to bow marrying the nephew of Mme. de Villeparisis, upon whom your father wouldn't allow me to call at first because he thought her too grand for me!" Then: "The son of Mme. de Cambremer to whom Legrandin

was so afraid of having to give us a letter of introduction because he didn't think us smart enough, marrying the niece of a man who would never dare to come to our flat except by the service stairs! . . . All the same your poor grandmother was right—you remember—when she said that the great nobility could do things that would shock the middle classes and that Queen Marie-Amélie was spoiled for her by the overtures that she made to the Prince de Condé's mistress to persuade him to leave his fortune to the Duc d'Aumale. You remember too, it shocked her that for centuries past daughters of the house of Gramont who have been perfect saints have borne the name Corisande in memory of Henri IV's connexion with one of their ancestresses. These are things that may happen also, perhaps, among the middle classes, but we conceal them better. Can't you imagine how it would have amused her, your poor grandmother?" said Mamma sadly, for the joys of which it grieved us to think that my grandmother was deprived were the simplest joys of life, a tale, a play, something more trifling still, a piece of mimicry, which would have amused her, "can't you imagine her astonishment? I am sure, however, that your grandmother would have been shocked by these marriages, that they would have grieved her, I feel that it is better that she never knew about them," my mother went on, for, when confronted with any event, she liked to think that my grandmother would have received a unique impression of it which would have been caused by the marvellous singularity of her nature and had an extraordinary importance. Did anything painful occur, which could not have been foreseen in the past, the disgrace or ruin of one of our old friends, some public ca-

lamity, an epidemic, a war, a revolution, my mother would say to herself that perhaps it was better that Grandmamma had known nothing about it, that it would have distressed her too keenly, that perhaps she would not have been able to endure it. And when it was a question of something startling like this, my mother, by an impulse directly opposite to that of the malicious people who like to imagine that others whom they do not like have suffered more than is generally supposed, would not, in her affection for my grandmother, allow that anything sad, or depressing, could ever have happened to her. She always imagined my grandmother as raised above the assaults even of any malady which ought not to have developed, and told herself that my grandmother's death had perhaps been a good thing on the whole, inasmuch as it had shut off the too ugly spectacle of the present day from that noble character which could never have become resigned to it. For optimism is the philosophy of the past. The events that have occurred being, among all those that were possible, the only ones which we have known, the harm that they have caused seems to us inevitable, and, for the slight amount of good that they could not help bringing with them, it is to them that we give the credit, imagining that without them it would not have occurred. But she sought at the same time to form a more accurate idea of what my grandmother would have felt when she learned these tidings, and to believe that it was impossible for our minds, less exalted than hers, to form any such idea. "Can't you imagine," my mother said to me first of all, "how astonished your poor grandmother would have been!" And I felt that my mother was pained by her inability to tell

her the news, regretted that my grandmother could not learn it, and felt it to be somehow unjust that the course of life should bring to light facts which my grandmother would never have believed, rendering thus retrospectively the knowledge which my grandmother had taken with her of people and society false, and incomplete, the marriage of the Jupien girl and Legrandin's nephew being calculated to modify my grandmother's general ideas of life, no less than the news—had my mother been able to convey it to her—that people had succeeded in solving the problems, which my grandmother had regarded as insoluble, of aerial navigation and wireless telegraphy.

The train reached Paris before my mother and I had finished discussing these two pieces of news which, so that the journey might not seem to me too long, she had deliberately reserved for the latter part of it, not mentioning them until we had passed Milan. And my mother continued the discussion after we had reached home: "Just imagine, that poor Swann who was so anxious that his Gilberte should be received by the Guermantes, how happy he would be if he could see his daughter become a Guermantes!" "Under another name, led to the altar as Mlle. de Forcheville, do you think he would be so happy after all?" "Ah, that is true. I had not thought of it. That is what makes it impossible for me to congratulate the little chit, the thought that she has had the heart to give up her father's name, when he was so good to her.—Yes, you are right, when all is said and done, it is perhaps just as well that he knows nothing about it." With the dead as with the living, we cannot tell whether a thing would cause them joy or sorrow. "It appears that the Saint-Loups are

going to live at Tansonville. Old father Swann, who was so anxious to shew your poor grandfather his pond, could he ever have dreamed that the Duc de Guermantes would see it constantly, especially if he had known of his son's marriage? And you yourself who have talked so often to Saint-Loup about the pink hawthorns and lilacs and irises at Tansonville, he will understand you better. They will be his property." Thus there developed in our dining-room, in the lamplight that is so congenial to them, one of those talks in which the wisdom not of nations but of families, taking hold of some event, a death, a betrothal, an inheritance, a bankruptcy, and slipping it under the magnifying glass of memory, brings it into high relief, detaches, thrusts back one surface of it, and places in perspective at different points in space and time what, to those who have not lived through the period in question, seems to be amalgamated upon a single surface, the names of dead people, successive addresses, the origins and changes of fortunes, transmissions of property. Is not this wisdom inspired by the Muse whom it is best to ignore for as long as possible, if we wish to retain any freshness of impressions, any creative power, but whom even those people who have ignored her meet in the evening of their life in the nave of the old country church, at the hour when all of a sudden they feel that they are less moved by eternal beauty as expressed in the carvings of the altar than by the thought of the vicissitudes of fortune which those carvings have undergone, passing into a famous private collection, to a chapel, from there to a museum, then returning at length to the church, or by the feeling as they tread upon a marble slab that is almost endowed with thought, that

it covers the last remains of Arnault or Pascal, or simply by deciphering (forming perhaps a mental picture of a fair young worshipper) on the brass plate of the wooden prayer-desk, the names of the daughters of country squire or leading citizen? The Muse who has gathered up everything that the more exalted Muses of philosophy and art have rejected, everything that is not founded upon truth, everything that is merely contingent, but that reveals other laws as well, is History.

What I was to learn later on—for I had been unable to keep in touch with all this affair from Venice—was that Mlle. de Forcheville's hand had been sought first of all by the Prince de Silistrie, while Saint-Loup was seeking to marry Mlle. d'Entragues, the Duc de Luxembourg's daughter. This is what had occurred. Mlle. de Forcheville possessing a hundred million francs, Mme. de Marsantes had decided that she would be an excellent match for her son. She made the mistake of saying that the girl was charming, that she herself had not the slightest idea whether she was rich or poor, that she did not wish to know, but that even without a penny it would be a piece of good luck for the most exacting of young men to find such a wife. This was going rather too far for a woman who was tempted only by the hundred millions, which blinded her eyes to everything else. At once it was understood that she was thinking of the girl for her own son. The Princesse de Silistrie went about uttering loud cries, expatiated upon the social importance of Saint-Loup, and proclaimed that if he should marry Odette's daughter by a Jew then there was no longer a Faubourg Saint-Germain. Mme. de Marsantes, sure of herself as she was, dared not advance farther and re-

treated before the cries of the Princesse de Silistrie, who immediately made a proposal in the name of her own son. She had protested only in order to keep Gilberte for herself. Meanwhile Mme. de Marsantes, refusing to own herself defeated, had turned at once to Mlle. d'Entragues, the Duc de Luxembourg's daughter. Having no more than twenty millions, she suited her purpose less, but Mme. de Marsantes told everyone that a Saint-Loup could not marry a Mlle. Swann (there was no longer any mention of Forcheville). Some time later, somebody having carelessly observed that the Duc de Châtellerault was thinking of marrying Mlle. d'Entragues, Mme. de Marsantes who was the most captious woman in the world mounted her high horse, changed her tactics, returned to Gilberte, made a formal offer of marriage on Saint-Loup's behalf, and the engagement was immediately announced. This engagement provoked keen comment in the most different spheres. Some old friends of my mother, who belonged more or less to Combray, came to see her to discuss Gilberte's marriage, which did not dazzle them in the least. "You know who Mlle. de Forcheville is, she is simply Mlle. Swann. And her witness at the marriage, the 'Baron' de Charlus, as he calls himself, is the old man who used to keep her mother at one time, under Swann's very nose, and no doubt to his advantage." "But what do you mean?" my mother protested, "In the first place, Swann was extremely rich." "We must assume that he was not as rich as all that if he needed other people's money. But what is there in the woman, that she keeps her old lovers like that? She has managed to persuade the third to marry her and she drags out the second when he has one foot in the

grave to make him act at the marriage of the daughter she had by the first or by some one else, for how is one to tell who the father was? She can't be certain herself! I said the third, it is the three hundredth I should have said. But then, don't you know, if she's no more a Forcheville than you or I, that puts her on the same level as the bridegroom who of course isn't noble at all. Only an adventurer would marry a girl like that. It appears he's just a plain Monsieur Dupont or Durand or something. If it weren't that we have a Radical mayor now at Combray, who doesn't even lift his hat to the priest, I should know all about it. Because, you understand, when they published the banns, they were obliged to give the real name. It is all very nice for the newspapers or for the stationer who sends out the intimations, to describe yourself as the Marquis de Saint-Loup. That does no harm to anyone, and if it can give any pleasure to those worthy people, I should be the last person in the world to object! What harm can it do me? As I shall never dream of going to call upon the daughter of a woman who has let herself be talked about, she can have a string of titles as long as my arm before her servants. But in an official document it's not the same thing. Ah, if my cousin Sazerat were still deputy-mayor, I should have written to him, and he would certainly have let *me* know what name the man was registered under."

Other friends of my mother who had met Saint-Loup in our house came to her "day," and inquired whether the bridegroom was indeed the same person as my friend. Certain people went so far as to maintain, with regard to the other marriage, that it had nothing to do with the

Legrandin Cambremers. They had this on good authority, for the Marquise, *née* Legrandin, had contradicted the rumour on the very eve of the day on which the engagement was announced. I, for my part, asked myself why M. de Charlus on the one hand, Saint-Loup on the other, each of whom had had occasion to write to me quite recently, had made various friendly plans and proposed expeditions, which must inevitably have clashed with the wedding ceremonies, and had said nothing whatever to me about these. I came to the conclusion, forgetting the secrecy which people always preserve until the last moment in affairs of this sort, that I was less their friend than I had supposed, a conclusion which, so far as Saint-Loup was concerned, distressed me. Though why, when I had already remarked that the affability, the "one-man-to-another" attitude of the aristocracy was all a sham, should I be surprised to find myself its victim? In the establishment for women—where men were now to be procured in increasing numbers—in which M. de Charlus had surprised Morel, and in which the "assistant matron," a great reader of the *Gaulois*, used to discuss the social gossip with her clients, this lady, while conversing with a stout gentleman who used to come to her incessantly to drink champagne with young men, because, being already very stout, he wished to become obese enough to be certain of not being "called up," should there ever be a war, declared: "It seems, young Saint-Loup is 'one of those' and young Cambremer too. Poor wives!—In any case, if you know the bridegrooms, you must send them to us, they will find everything they want here, and there's plenty of money to be made out of them." Whereupon the stout

gentleman, albeit he was himself "one of those," protested, replied, being something of a snob, that he often met Cambremer and Saint-Loup at his cousin's the Ardouvillers, and that they were great womanisers, and quite the opposite of "all that." "Ah!" the assistant matron concluded in a sceptical tone, but without any proof of the assertion, and convinced that in our generation the perversity of morals was rivalled only by the absurd exaggeration of slanderous rumours. Certain people whom I no longer saw wrote to me and asked me "what I thought" of these two marriages, precisely as though they had been inviting a public discussion of the height of women's hats in the theatre or the psychological novel. I had not the heart to answer these letters. Of these two marriages, I thought nothing at all, but I did feel an immense melancholy, as when two parts of our past existence, which have been anchored near to us, and upon which we have perhaps been basing idly from day to day an unacknowledged hope, remove themselves finally, with a joyous crackling of flames, for unknown destinations, like two vessels on the high seas. As for the prospective bridegrooms themselves, they regarded their own marriages from a point of view that was quite natural, since it was a question not of other people but of themselves. They had never tired of mocking at such "grand marriages" founded upon some secret shame. And indeed the Cambremer family, so ancient in its lineage and so modest in its pretensions, would have been the first to forget Jupien and to remember only the unimaginable grandeur of the House of Oloron, had not an exception occurred in the person who ought to have been most gratified by this marriage, the Marquise de

Cambremer-Legrandin. For, being of a malicious nature, she reckoned the pleasure of humiliating her family above that of glorifying herself. And so, as she had no affection for her son, and was not long in taking a dislike to her daughter-in-law, she declared that it was a calamity for a Cambremer to marry a person who had sprung from heaven knew where, and had such bad teeth. As for young Cambremer, who had already shewn a certain tendency to frequent the society of literary people, we may well imagine that so brilliant an alliance had not the effect of making him more of a snob than before, but that feeling himself to have become the successor of the Ducs d'Oloron—"sovereign princes" as the newspapers said—he was sufficiently persuaded of his own importance to be able to mix with the very humblest people. And he deserted the minor nobility for the intelligent bourgeoisie on the days when he did not confine himself to royalty. The notices in the papers, especially when they referred to Saint-Loup, invested my friend, whose royal ancestors were enumerated, in a fresh importance, which however could only depress me —as though he had become some one else, the descendant of Robert the Strong, rather than the friend who, only a little while since, had taken the back seat in the carriage in order that I might be more comfortable in the other; the fact that I had had no previous suspicion of his marriage with Gilberte, the prospect of which had been revealed to me suddenly in a letter, so different from anything that I could have expected of either him or her the day before, and the fact that he had not let me know pained me, whereas I ought to have reflected that he had had a great many other things to do, and

that moreover in the fashionable world marriages are often arranged like this all of a sudden, generally as a substitute for a different combination which has come to grief—unexpectedly—like a chemical precipitation. And the feeling of sadness, as depressing as a household removal, as bitter as jealousy, that these marriages caused me by the accident of their sudden impact was so profound, that later on people used to remind me of it, paying absurd compliments to my perspicacity, as having been just the opposite of what it was at the time, a twofold, nay a threefold and fourfold presentiment.

The people in society who had taken no notice of Gilberte said to me with an air of serious interest: "Ah! It is she who is marrying the Marquis de Saint-Loup" and studied her with the attentive gaze of people who not merely relish all the social gossip of Paris but are anxious to learn, and believe in the profundity of their own introspection. Those who on the other hand had known Gilberte alone gazed at Saint-Loup with the closest attention, asked me (these were often people who barely knew me) to introduce them and returned from their presentation to the bridegroom radiant with the bliss of fatuity, saying to me: "He is very nice looking." Gilberte was convinced that the name "Marquis de Saint-Loup" was a thousand times more important than "Duc d'Orléans."

"It appears that it is the Princesse de Parme who arranged young Cambremer's marriage," Mamma told me. And this was true. The Princess had known for a long time, on the one hand, by his works, Legrandin whom she regarded as a distinguished man, on the other hand Mme. de Cambremer who changed the conversation

whenever the Princess asked her whether she was not Legrandin's sister. The Princess knew how keenly Mme. de Cambremer felt her position on the doorstep of the great aristocratic world, in which she was invited nowhere. When the Princesse de Parme, who had undertaken to find a husband for Mlle. d'Oloron, asked M. de Charlus whether he had ever heard of a pleasant, educated man who called himself Legrandin de Méséglise (thus it was that M. Legrandin now styled himself), the Baron first of all replied in the negative, then suddenly a memory occurred to him of a man whose acquaintance he had made in the train, one night, and who had given him his card. He smiled a vague smile. "It is perhaps the same person," he said to himself. When he discovered that the prospective bridegroom was the son of Legrandin's sister, he said: "Why, that would be really extraordinary! If he takes after his uncle, after all, that would not alarm me, I have always said that they make the best husbands." "Who are *they?*" inquired the Princess. "Oh, Ma'am, I could explain it all to you if we met more often. With you one can talk freely. Your Highness is so intelligent," said Charlus, seized by a desire to confide in some one which, however, went no farther. The name Cambremer appealed to him, although he did not like the boy's parents, but he knew that it was one of the four Baronies of Brittany and the best that he could possibly hope for his adopted daughter; it was an old and respected name, with solid connexions in its native province. A Prince would have been out of the question and, moreover, not altogether desirable. This was the very thing. The Princess then invited Legrandin to call. In appearance he had considerably

altered, and, of late, distinctly to his advantage. Like those women who deliberately sacrifice their faces to the slimness of their figures and never stir from Marienbad, Legrandin had acquired the free and easy air of a cavalry officer. In proportion as M. de Charlus had grown coarse and slow, Legrandin had become slimmer and moved more rapidly, the contrary effect of an identical cause. This velocity of movement had its psychological reasons as well. He was in the habit of frequenting certain low haunts where he did not wish to be seen going in or coming out: he would hurl himself into them. Legrandin had taken up tennis at the age of fifty-five. When the Princesse de Parme spoke to him of the Guermantes, of Saint-Loup, he declared that he had known them all his life, making a sort of composition of the fact of his having always known by name the proprietors of Guermantes and that of his having met, at my aunt's house, Swann, the father of the future Mme. de Saint-Loup, Swann upon whose wife and daughter Legrandin, at Combray, had always refused to call. "Indeed, I travelled quite recently with the brother of the Duc de Guermantes, M. de Charlus. He began the conversation spontaneously, which is always a good sign, for it proves that a man is neither a tongue-tied lout nor stuck-up. Oh, I know all the things that people say about him. But I never pay any attention to gossip of that sort Besides, the private life of other people does not concern me. He gave me the impression of a sensitive nature, and a cultivated mind." Then the Princesse de Parme spoke of Mlle. d'Oloron. In the Guermantes circle people were moved by the nobility of heart of M. de Charlus who, generous as he had always been, was securing the future happiness

of a penniless but charming girl. And the Duc de Guermantes, who suffered from his brother's reputation, let it be understood that, fine as this conduct was, it was wholly natural. "I don't know if I make myself clear, everything in the affair is natural," he said, speaking ineptly by force of habit. But his object was to indicate that the girl was a daughter of his brother whom the latter was acknowledging. This accounted at the same time for Jupien. The Princesse de Parme hinted at this version of the story to shew Legrandin that after all young Cambremer would be marrying something in the nature of Mlle. de Nantes, one of those bastards of Louis XIV who were not scorned either by the Duc d'Orléans or by the Prince de Conti.

These two marriages which I had already begun to discuss with my mother in the train that brought us back to Paris had quite remarkable effects upon several of the characters who have figured in the course of this narrative. First of all upon Legrandin; needless to say that he swept like a hurricane into M. de Charlus's town house for all the world as though he were entering a house of ill-fame where he must on no account be seen, and also, at the same time, to display his activity and to conceal his age—for our habits accompany us even into places where they are no longer of any use to us—and scarcely anybody observed that when M. de Charlus greeted him he did so with a smile which it was hard to intercept, harder still to interpret; this smile was similar in appearance, and in its essentials was diametrically opposite to the smile which two men, who are in the habit of meeting in good society, exchange if they happen to meet in what they regard as disreputable surroundings (such as the

Elysée where General de Froberville, whenever, in days past, he met Swann there, would assume, on catching sight of him, an expression of ironical and mysterious complicity appropriate between two frequenters of the drawing-room of the Princesse des Laumes who were compromising themselves by visiting M. Grevy). Legrandin had been cultivating obscurely for a long time past—ever since the days when I used to go as a child to spend my holidays at Combray—relations with the aristocracy, productive at the most of an isolated invitation to a sterile house party. All of a sudden, his nephew's marriage having intervened to join up these scattered fragments, Legrandin stepped into a social position which retroactively derived a sort of solidity from his former relations with people who had known him only as a private person but had known him well. Ladies to whom people offered to introduce him informed them that for the last twenty years he had stayed with them in the country for a fortnight annually, and that it was he who had given them the beautiful old barometer in the small drawing-room. It so happened that he had been photographed in "groups" which included Dukes who were related to them. But as soon as he had acquired this social position, he ceased to make any use of it. This was not merely because, now that people knew him to be received everywhere, he no longer derived any pleasure from being invited, it was because, of the two vices that had long struggled for the mastery of him, the less natural, snobbishness, yielded its place to another that was less artificial, since it did at least shew a sort of return, albeit circuitous, towards nature. No doubt the two are not incompatible, and a nocturnal tour of exploration

of a slum may be made immediately upon leaving a Duchess's party. But the chilling effect of age made Legrandin reluctant to accumulate such an abundance of pleasures, to stir out of doors except with a definite purpose, and had also the effect that the pleasures of nature became more or less platonic, consisting chiefly in friendships, in conversations which took up time, and made him spend almost all his own among the lower orders, so that he had little left for a social existence. Mme. de Cambremer herself became almost indifferent to the friendly overtures of the Duchesse de Guermantes. The latter, obliged to call upon the Marquise, had noticed, as happens whenever we come to see more of our fellow-creatures, that is to say combinations of good qualities which we end by discovering with defects to which we end by growing accustomed, that Mme. de Cambremer was a woman endowed with an innate intelligence and an acquired culture of which for my part I thought but little, but which appeared remarkable to the Duchess. And so she often came, late in the afternoon, to see Mme. de Cambremer and paid her long visits. But the marvellous charm which her hostess imagined as existing in the Duchesse de Guermantes vanished as soon as she saw that the other sought her company, and she received her rather out of politeness than for her own pleasure. A more striking change was manifest in Gilberte, a change at once symmetrical with and different from that which had occurred in Swann after his marriage. It is true that during the first few months Gilberte had been glad to open her doors to the most select company. It was doubtless only with a view to an eventual inheritance that she invited the intimate friends to whom her mother was at-

tached, but on certain days only when there was no one but themselves, secluded apart from the fashionable people, as though the contact of Mme. Bontemps or Mme. Cottard with the Princesse de Guermantes or the Princesse de Parme might, like that of two unstable powders, have produced irreparable catastrophes. Nevertheless the Bontemps, the Cottards and such, although disappointed by the smallness of the party, were proud of being able to say: "We were dining with the Marquise de Saint-Loup," all the more so as she ventured at times so far as to invite, with them, Mme. de Marsantes, who was emphatically the "great lady" with a fan of tortoise-shell and ostrich feathers, this again being a piece of legacy-hunting. She only took care to pay from time to time a tribute to the discreet people whom one never sees except when they are invited, a warning with which she bestowed upon her audience of the Cottard-Bontemps class her most gracious and distant greeting. Perhaps I should have preferred to be included in these parties. But Gilberte, in whose eyes I was now principally a friend of her husband and of the Guermantes, (and who —perhaps even in the Combray days, when my parents did not call upon her mother—had, at the age when we do not merely add this or that to the value of things but classify them according to their species, endowed me with that prestige which we never afterwards lose) regarded these evenings as unworthy of me, and when I took my leave of her would say: "It has been delightful to see you, but come again the day after to-morrow, you will find my aunt Guermantes, and Mme. de Poix; to-day I just had a few of Mamma's friends, to please Mamma." But this state of things lasted for a few months only, and

very soon everything was altered. Was this because Gilberte's social life was fated to exhibit the same contrasts as Swann's? However that may be, Gilberte had been only for a short time Marquise de Saint-Loup (in the process of becoming, as we shall see, Duchesse de Guermantes [1]) when, having attained to the most brilliant and most difficult position, she decided that the name Saint-Loup was now embodied in herself like a glowing enamel and that, whoever her associates might be, from now onwards she would remain for all the world Marquise de Saint-Loup, wherein she was mistaken, for the value of a title of nobility, like that of shares in a company, rises with the demand and falls when it is offered in the market. Everything that seems to us imperishable tends to destruction; a position in society, like anything else, is not created once and for all time, but, just as much as the power of an Empire, reconstructs itself at every moment by a sort of perpetual process of creation, which explains the apparent anomalies in social or political history in the course of half a century. The creation of the world did not occur at the beginning of time, it occurs every day. The Marquise de Saint-Loup said to herself, "I am the Marquise de Saint-Loup," she knew that, the day before, she had refused three invitations to dine with Duchesses. But if, to a certain extent, her name exalted the class of people, as little aristocratic as possible, whom she entertained, by an inverse process, the class of people whom the Marquise entertained depreciated the name that she bore. Nothing can hold out against such processes, the greatest names succumb to them in the end.

[1] This is quite inexplicable. Gilberte reappears as Saint-Loup's widow while the Duc de Guermantes and his wife are still alive.

Had not Swann known a Duchess of the House of France whose drawing-room, because any Tom, Dick or Harry was welcomed there, had fallen to the lowest rank? One day when the Princesse des Laumes had gone from a sense of duty to call for a moment upon this Highness, in whose drawing-room she had found only the most ordinary people, arriving immediately afterwards at Mme. Leroi's, she had said to Swann and the Marquis de Modène: "At last I find myself upon friendly soil. I have just come from Mme. la Duchesse de X—, there weren't three faces I knew in the room." Sharing, in short, the opinion of the character in the operetta who declares: "My name, I think, dispenses me from saying more," Gilberte set to work to flaunt her contempt for what she had so ardently desired, to proclaim that all the people in the Faubourg Saint-Germain were idiots, people to whose houses one could not go, and, suiting the action to the word, ceased to go to them. People who did not make her acquaintance until after this epoch, and who, in the first stages of that acquaintance, heard her, by that time Duchesse de Guermantes, make the most absurd fun of the world in which she could so easily have moved, seeing that she never invited a single person out of that world, and that if any of them, even the most brilliant, ventured into her drawing-room, she would yawn openly in their faces, blush now in retrospect at the thought that they themselves could ever have seen any claim to distinction in the fashionable world, and would never dare to confess this humiliating secret of their past weaknesses to a woman whom they suppose to have been, owing to an essential loftiness of her nature, incapable from her earliest moments of understanding such things.

They hear her poke such delicious fun at Dukes, and see her (which is more significant) make her behaviour accord so entirely with her mockery! No doubt they do not think of inquiring into the causes of the accident which turned Mlle. Swann into Mlle. de Forcheville, Mlle. de Forcheville into the Marquise de Saint-Loup, and finally into the Duchesse de Guermantes. Possibly it does not occur to them either that the effects of this accident would serve no less than its causes to explain Gilberte's subsequent attitude, the habit of mixing with upstarts not being regarded quite in the same light in which Mlle. Swann would have regarded it by a lady whom everybody addresses as "Madame la Duchesse" and the other Duchesses who bore her as "cousin." We are always ready to despise a goal which we have not succeeded in reaching, or have permanently reached. And this contempt seems to us to form part of the character of people whom we do not yet know. Perhaps if we were able to retrace the course of past years, we should find them devoured, more savagely than anyone, by those same weaknesses which they have succeeded so completely in concealing or conquering that we reckon them incapable not only of having ever been attacked by them themselves, but even of ever excusing them in other people, let alone being capable of imagining them. Anyhow, very soon the drawing-room of the new Marquise de Saint-Loup assumed its permanent aspect, from the social point of view at least, for we shall see what troubles were brewing in it in another connexion; well, this aspect was surprising for the following reason: people still remembered that the most formal, the most exclusive parties in Paris, as brilliant as those given by the Marquise de Guer-

mantes, were those of Mme. de Marsantes, Saint-Loup's mother. On the other hand, in recent years, Odette's drawing-room, infinitely lower in the social scale, had been no less dazzling in its elegance and splendour. Saint-Loup, however, delighted to have, thanks to his wife's vast fortune, everything that he could desire in the way of comfort, wished only to rest quietly in his arm-chair after a good dinner with a musical entertainment by good performers. And this young man who had seemed at one time so proud, so ambitious, invited to share his luxury old friends whom his mother would not have admitted to her house. Gilberte, on her side, put into effect Swann's saying: "Quality doesn't matter, what I dread is quantity." And Saint-Loup, always on his knees before his wife, and because he loved her, and because it was to her that he owed these extremes of comfort, took care not to interfere with tastes that were so similar to his own. With the result that the great receptions given by Mme. de Marsantes and Mme. de Forcheville, given year after year with an eye chiefly to the establishment, upon a brilliant footing, of their children, gave rise to no reception by M. and Mme. de Saint-Loup. They had the best of saddle-horses on which to go out riding together, the finest of yachts in which to cruise—but they never took more than a couple of guests with them. In Paris, every evening, they would invite three or four friends to dine, never more; with the result that, by an unforeseen but at the same time quite natural retrogression, the two vast maternal aviaries had been replaced by a silent nest.

The person who profited least by these two marriages was the young Mademoiselle d'Oloron who, already suf-

fering from typhoid fever on the day of the religious ceremony, was barely able to crawl to the church and died a few weeks later. The letter of intimation that was sent out some time after her death blended with names such as Jupien's those of almost all the greatest families in Europe, such as the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Montmorency, H.R.H. the Comtesse de Bourbon-Soissons, the Prince of Modena-Este, the Vicomtesse d'Edumea, Lady Essex, and so forth. No doubt even to a person who knew that the deceased was Jupien's niece, this plethora of grand connexions would not cause any surprise. The great thing, after all, is to have grand connexions. Then, the *casus foederis* coming into play, the death of a simple little shop-girl plunges all the princely families of Europe in mourning. But many young men of a later generation, who were not familiar with the facts, might, apart from the possibility of their mistaking Marie-Antoinette d'Oloron, Marquise de Cambremer, for a lady of the noblest birth, have been guilty of many other errors when they read this communication. Thus, supposing their excursions through France to have given them some slight familiarity with the country round Combray, when they saw that the Comte de Méséglise figured among the first of the signatories, close to the Duc de Guermantes, they might not have felt any surprise. "The Méséglise way," they might have said, "converges with the Guermantes way, old and noble families of the same region may have been allied for generations. Who knows? It is perhaps a branch of the Guermantes family which bears the title of Comte de Méséglise." As it happened, the Comte de Méséglise had no connexion with the Guermantes and was not even enrolled on the Guermantes

side, but on the Cambremer side, since the Comte de Méséglise, who by a rapid advancement had been for two years only Legrandin de Méséglise, was our old friend Legrandin. No doubt, taking one false title with another, there were few that could have been so disagreeable to the Guermantes as this. They had been connected in the past with the authentic Comtes de Méséglise, of whom there survived only one female descendant, the daughter of obscure and unassuming parents, married herself to one of my aunt's tenant farmers named Ménager, who had become rich and bought Mirougrain from her and now styled himself "Ménager de Mirougrain," with the result that when you said that his wife was born "de Méséglise" people thought that she must simply have been born at Méséglise and that she was "of Méséglise" as her husband was "of Mirougrain."

Any other sham title would have caused less annoyance to the Guermantes family. But the aristocracy knows how to tolerate these irritations and many others as well, the moment that a marriage which is deemed advantageous, from whatever point of view, is in question. Shielded by the Duc de Guermantes, Legrandin was, to part of that generation, and will be to the whole of the generation that follows it, the true Comte de Méséglise.

Yet another mistake which any young reader not acquainted with the facts might have been led to make was that of supposing that the Baron and Baronne de Forcheville figured on the list in their capacity as parents-in-law of the Marquis de Saint-Loup, that is to say on the Guermantes side. But on this side, they had no right to appear since it was Robert who was related to the Guermantes and not Gilberte. No, the Baron and Baronne

de Forcheville, despite this misleading suggestion, did figure on the wife's side, it is true, and not on the Cambremer side, because not of the Guermantes, but of Jupien, who, the reader must now be told, was a cousin of Odette.

All M. de Charlus's favour had been lavished since the marriage of his adopted niece upon the young Marquis de Cambremer; the young man's tastes which were similar to those of the Baron, since they had not prevented the Baron from selecting him as a husband for Mlle. d'Oloron, made him, as was only natural, appreciate him all the more when he was left a widower. This is not to say that the Marquis had not other qualities which made him a charming companion for M. de Charlus. But even in the case of a man of real merit, it is an advantage that is not disdained by the person who admits him into his private life and one that makes him particularly useful that he can also play whist. The intelligence of the young Marquis was remarkable and as they had already begun to say at Féterne when he was barely out of his cradle, he "took" entirely after his grandmother, had the same enthusiasms, the same love of music. He reproduced also some of her peculiarities, but these more by imitation, like all the rest of the family, than from atavism. Thus it was that, some time after the death of his wife, having received a letter signed "Léonor," a name which I did not remember as being his, I realised who it was that had written to me only when I had read the closing formula: "*Croyez à ma sympathie vraie,*" the word "*vraie,*" coming in that order, added to the Christian name Léonor the surname Cambremer.

About this time I used to see a good deal of Gilberte

with whom I had renewed my old intimacy: for our life, in the long run, is not calculated according to the duration of our friendships. Let a certain period of time elapse and you will see reappear (just as former Ministers reappear in politics, as old plays are revived on the stage) friendly relations that have been revived between the same persons as before, after long years of interruption, and revived with pleasure. After ten years, the reasons which made one party love too passionately, the other unable to endure a too exacting despotism, no longer exist. Convention alone survives, and everything that Gilberte would have refused me in the past, that had seemed to her intolerable, impossible, she granted me quite readily—doubtless because I no longer desired it. Although neither of us avowed to himself the reason for this change, if she was always ready to come to me, never in a hurry to leave me, it was because the obstacle had vanished: my love.

I went, moreover, a little later to spend a few days at Tansonville. The move I found rather a nuisance, for I was keeping a girl in Paris who slept in the bachelor flat which I had rented. As other people need the aroma of forests or the ripple of a lake, so I needed her sleep near at hand during the night and by day to have her always by my side in the carriage. For even if one love passes into oblivion, it may determine the form of the love that is to follow it. Already, in the heart even of the previous love, daily habits existed, the origin of which we did not ourself recall. It was an anguish of a former day that had made us think with longing, then adopt in a permanent fashion, like customs the meaning of which has been forgotten, those homeward drives to the beloved's

door, or her residence in our home, our presence or the presence of some one in whom we have confidence upon all her outings, all these habits, like great uniform highroads along which our love passes daily and which were forged long ago in the volcanic fire of an ardent emotion. But these habits survive the woman, survive even the memory of the woman. They become the pattern, if not of all our loves, at least of certain of our loves which alternate with the others. And thus my home had demanded, in memory of a forgotten Albertine, the presence of my mistress of the moment whom I concealed from visitors and who filled my life as Albertine had filled it in the past. And before I could go to Tansonville I had to make her promise that she would place herself in the hands of one of my friends who did not care for women, for a few days.

I had heard that Gilberte was unhappy, betrayed by Robert, but not in the fashion which everyone supposed, which perhaps she herself still supposed, which in any case she alleged. An opinion that was justified by self-esteem, the desire to hoodwink other people, to hoodwink herself, not to mention the imperfect knowledge of his infidelities which is all that betrayed spouses ever acquire, all the more so as Robert, a true nephew of M. de Charlus, went about openly with women whom he compromised, whom the world believed and whom Gilberte supposed more or less to be his mistresses. It was even thought in society that he was too barefaced, never stirring, at a party, from the side of some woman whom he afterwards accompanied home, leaving Mme. de Saint-Loup to return as best she might. Anyone who had said that the other woman whom he compromised thus was not

really his mistress would have been regarded as a fool, incapable of seeing what was staring him in the face, but I had been pointed, alas, in the direction of the truth, a truth which caused me infinite distress, by a few words let fall by Jupien. What had been my amazement when, having gone, a few months before my visit to Tansonville, to inquire for M. de Charlus, in whom certain cardiac symptoms had been causing his friends great anxiety, and having mentioned to Jupien, whom I found by himself, some love-letters addressed to Robert and signed Bobette which Mme. de Saint-Loup had discovered, I learned from the Baron's former factotum that the person who used the signature Bobette was none other than the violinist who had played so important a part in the life of M. de Charlus. Jupien could not speak of him without indignation: "The boy was free to do what he chose. But if there was one direction in which he ought never to have looked, that was the Baron's nephew. All the more so as the Baron loved his nephew like his own son. He has tried to separate the young couple, it is scandalous. And he must have gone about it with the most devilish cunning, or no one was ever more opposed to that sort of thing than the Marquis de Saint-Loup. To think of all the mad things he has done for his mistresses! No, that wretched musician may have deserted the Baron as he did, by a mean trick, I don't mind saying; still, that was his business. But to take up with the nephew, there are certain things that are not done." Jupien was sincere in his indignation; among people who are styled immoral, moral indignation is quite as violent as among other people, only its object is slightly different. What is more, people whose own hearts are

not directly engaged, always regard unfortunate entanglements, disastrous marriages as though we were free to choose the inspiration of our love, and do not take into account the exquisite mirage which love projects and which envelops so entirely and so uniquely the person with whom we are in love that the "folly" with which a man is charged who marries his cook or the mistress of his best friend is as a rule the only poetical action that he performs in the course of his existence.

I gathered that Robert and his wife had been on the brink of a separation (albeit Gilberte had not yet discovered the precise nature of the trouble) and that it was Mme. de Marsantes, a loving, ambitious and philosophical mother, who had arranged and enforced their reconciliation. She moved in those circles in which the inbreeding of incessantly crossed strains and a gradual impoverishment bring to the surface at every moment in the realm of the passions, as in that of pecuniary interest, inherited vices and compromises. With the same energy with which she had in the past protected Mme. Swann, she had assisted the marriage of Jupien's niece and brought about that of her own son to Gilberte, employing thus on her own account, with a pained resignation, the same primeval wisdom which she dispensed throughout the Faubourg. And perhaps what had made her at a certain moment expedite Robert's marriage to Gilberte—which had certainly caused her less trouble and cost fewer tears than making him break with Rachel—had been the fear of his forming with another courtesan—or perhaps with the same one, for Robert took a long time to forget Rachel—a fresh attachment which might have been his salvation. Now I understood what Robert had

meant when he said to me at the Princesse de Guermantes's: "It is a pity that your young friend at Balbec has not the fortune that my mother insists upon. I believe she and I would have got on very well together." He had meant that she belonged to Gomorrah as he belonged to Sodom, or perhaps, if he was not yet enrolled there, that he had ceased to enjoy women whom he could not love in a certain fashion and in the company of other women. Gilberte, too, might be able to enlighten me as to Albertine. If then, apart from rare moments of retrospect, I had not lost all my curiosity as to the life of my dead mistress, I should have been able to question not merely Gilberte but her husband. And it was, after all, the same thing that had made both Robert and myself anxious to marry Albertine (to wit, the knowledge that she was a lover of women). But the causes of our desire, like its objects for that matter, were opposite. In my case, it was the desperation in which I had been plunged by the discovery, in Robert's the satisfaction; in my case to prevent her, by perpetual vigilance, from indulging her predilection; in Robert's to cultivate it, and by granting her her freedom to make her bring her girl friends to him. If Jupien traced back to a quite recent origin the fresh orientation, so divergent from their original course, that Robert's carnal desires had assumed, a conversation which I had with Aimé and which made me very miserable shewed me that the head-waiter at Balbec traced this divergence, this inversion to a far earlier date. The occasion of this conversation had been my going for a few days to Balbec, where Saint-Loup himself had also come with his wife, whom during this first phase he never allowed out of his sight. I had marvelled to see how

Rachel's influence over Robert still made itself felt. Only a young husband who has long been keeping a mistress knows how to take off his wife's cloak as they enter a restaurant, how to treat her with befitting courtesy. He has, during his illicit relations, learned all that a good husband should know. Not far from him at a table adjoining my own, Bloch among a party of pretentious young university men, was assuming a false air of being at his ease and shouted at the top of his voice to one of his friends, as he ostentatiously passed him the bill of fare with a gesture which upset two water-bottles: "No, no, my dear man, order! Never in my life have I been able to make head or tail of these documents. I have never known how to order dinner!" he repeated with a pride that was hardly sincere and, blending literature with gluttony, decided at once upon a bottle of champagne which he liked to see "in a purely symbolic fashion" adorning a conversation. Saint-Loup, on the other hand, did know how to order dinner. He was seated by the side of Gilberte—already pregnant (he was, in the years that followed, to keep her continually supplied with offspring[1])—as he would presently lie down by her side in their double bed in the hotel. He spoke to no one but his wife, the rest of the hotel appeared not to exist for him, but at the moment when a waiter came to take his order, and stood close beside him, he swiftly raised his blue eyes and darted a glance at him which did not last for more than two seconds, but in its limpid penetration seemed to indicate a kind of curiosity and investigation entirely different from that which might have ani-

[1] *Dis aliter visum.* We shall see, in the sequel, that the widowed Gilberte appears to be the mother of an only daughter. C. K. S. M.

mated any ordinary diner studying, even at greater length, a page or messenger, with a view to making humorous or other observations which he would communicate to his friends. This little quick glance, apparently quite disinterested, revealed to those who had intercepted it that this excellent husband, this once so passionate lover of Rachel, possessed another plane in his life, and one that seemed to him infinitely more interesting than that upon which he moved from a sense of duty. But it was to be discerned only in that glance. Already his eyes had returned to Gilberte who had seen nothing, he introduced a passing friend and left the room to stroll with her outside. Now, Aimé was speaking to me at that moment of a far earlier time, the time when I had made Saint-Loup's acquaintance, through Mme. de Villeparisis, at this same Balbec. "Why, surely, Sir," he said to me, "it is common knowledge, I have known it for ever so long. The year when Monsieur first came to Balbec, M. le Marquis shut himself up with my lift-boy, on the excuse of developing some photographs of Monsieur's grandmother. The boy made a complaint, we had the greatest difficulty in hushing the matter up. And besides, Monsier, Monsieur remembers the day, no doubt, when he came to luncheon at the restaurant with M. le Marquis de Saint-Loup and his mistress, whom M. le Marquis was using as a screen. Monsieur doubtless remembers that M. le Marquis left the room, pretending that he had lost his temper. Of course I don't suggest for a moment that Madame was in the right. She was leading him a regular dance. But as to that day, no one will ever make me believe that M. le Marquis's anger wasn't put on, and that he hadn't a good reason to get away from Monsieur and

Madame." So far as this day was concerned, I am convinced that, if Aimé was not lying consciously, he was entirely mistaken. I remembered quite well the state Robert was in, the blow he struck the journalist. And, for that matter, it was the same with the Balbec incident; either the lift-boy had lied, or it was Aimé who was lying. At least, I supposed so; certainty I could not feel, for we never see more than one aspect of things. Had it not been that the thought distressed me, I should have found a refreshing irony in the fact that, whereas to me sending the lift-boy to Saint-Loup had been the most convenient way of conveying a letter to him and receiving his answer, to him it had meant making the acquaintance of a person who had taken his fancy. Everything, indeed, is at least twofold. Upon the most insignificant action that we perform, another man will graft a series of entirely different actions; it is certain that Saint-Loup's adventure with the lift-boy, if it occurred, no more seemed to me to be involved in the commonplace dispatch of my letter than a man who knew nothing of Wagner save the duet in *Lohengrin* would be able to foresee the prelude to *Tristan.* Certainly to men, things offer only a limited number of their innumerable attributes, because of the paucity of our senses. They are coloured because we have eyes, how many other epithets would they not merit if we had hundreds of senses? But this different aspect which they might present is made more comprehensible to us by the occurrence in life of even the most trivial event of which we know a part which we suppose to be the whole, and at which another person looks as though through a window opening upon another side of the house and offering a different view. Supposing that

Aimé had not been mistaken, Saint-Loup's blush when Bloch spoke to him of the lift-boy had not, perhaps, been due after all to my friend's pronouncing the word as "lighft." But I was convinced that Saint-Loup's physiological evolution had not begun at that period and that he then had been still exclusively a lover of women. More than by any other sign, I could tell this retrospectively by the friendship that Saint-Loup had shewn for myself at Balbec. It was only while he was in love with women that he was really capable of friendship. Afterwards, for some time at least, to the men who did not attract him physically he displayed an indifference which was to some extent, I believe, sincere—for he had become very curt—and which he exaggerated as well in order to make people think that he was interested only in women. But I remember all the same that one day at Doncières, as I was on my way to dine with the Verdurins, and after he had been gazing rather markedly at Morel, he had said to me: "Curious, that fellow, he reminds me in some ways of Rachel. Don't you notice the likeness? To my mind, they are identical in certain respects. Not that it can make any difference to me." And nevertheless his eyes remained for a long time gazing abstractedly at the horizon, as when we think, before returning to the card-table or going out to dinner, of one of those long voyages which we shall never make, but for which we feel a momentary longing. But if Robert found certain traces of Rachel in Charlie, Gilberte, for her part, sought to present some similarity to Rachel, so as to attract her husband, wore like her bows of scarlet or pink or yellow ribbon in her hair, which she dressed in a similar style, for she believed that her husband was still in love with Rachel, and so

was jealous of her. That Robert's love may have hovered at times over the boundary which divides the love of a man for a woman from the love of a man for a man was quite possible. In any case, the part played by his memory of Rachel was now purely aesthetic. It is indeed improbable that it could have played any other part. One day Robert had gone to her to ask her to dress up as a man, to leave a long tress of hair hanging down, and nevertheless had contented himself with gazing at her without satisfying his desire. He remained no less attached to her than before and paid her scrupulously but without any pleasure the enormous allowance that he had promised her, not that this prevented her from treating him in the most abominable fashion later on. This generosity towards Rachel would not have distressed Gilberte if she had known that it was merely the resigned fulfilment of a promise which no longer bore any trace of love. But love was, on the contrary, precisely what he pretended to feel for Rachel. Homosexuals would be the best husbands in the world if they did not make a show of being in love with other women. Not that Gilberte made any complaint. It was the thought that Robert had been loved, for years on end, by Rachel that had made her desire him, had made her refuse more eligible suitors; it seemed that he was making a sort of concession to her when he married her. And indeed, at first, any comparison between the two women (incomparable as they were nevertheless in charm and beauty) did not favour the delicious Gilberte. But the latter became enhanced later on in her husband's esteem whereas Rachel grew visibly less important. There was another person who contradicted herself: namely, Mme. Swann. If, in

Gilberte's eyes, Robert before their marriage was already crowned with the twofold halo which was created for him on the one hand by his life with Rachel, perpetually proclaimed in Mme. de Marsantes's lamentations, on the other hand by the prestige which the Guermantes family had always had in her father's eyes and which she had inherited from him, Mme. de Forcheville would have preferred a more brilliant, perhaps a princely marriage (there were royal families that were impoverished and would have accepted the dowry—which, for that matter, proved to be considerably less than the promised millions —purged as it was by the name Forcheville) and a son-in-law less depreciated in social value by a life spent in comparative seclusion. She had not been able to prevail over Gilberte's determination, had complained bitterly to all and sundry, denouncing her son-in-law. One fine day she had changed her tune, the son-in-law had become an angel, nothing was ever said against him except in private. The fact was that age had left unimpaired in Mme. Swann (become Mme. de Forcheville) the need that she had always felt of financial support, but, by the desertion of her admirers, had deprived her of the means. She longed every day for another necklace, a new dress studded with brilliants, a more sumptuous motor-car, but she had only a small income, Forcheville having made away with most of it, and—what Israelite strain controlled Gilberte in this?—she had an adorable, but a fearfully avaricious daughter, who counted every penny that she gave her husband, not to mention her mother. Well, all of a sudden she had discerned, and then found her natural protector in Robert. That she was no longer in her first youth mattered little to a son-in-law who was

not a lover of women. All that he asked of his mother-in-law was to smoothe down some little difficulty that had arisen between Gilberte and himself, to obtain his wife's consent to his going for a holiday with Morel. Odette had lent her services, and was at once rewarded with a magnificent ruby. To pay for this, it was necessary that Gilberte should treat her husband more generously. Odette preached this doctrine to her with all the more fervour in that it was she herself who would benefit by her daughter's generosity. Thus, thanks to Robert, she was enabled, on the threshold of her fifties (some people said, of her sixties) to dazzle every table at which she dined, every party at which she appeared, with an unparalleled splendour without needing to have, as in the past, a "friend" who now would no longer have stood for it, in other words have paid the piper. And so she had entered finally, it appeared, into the period of ultimate chastity, and yet she had never been so smart.

It was not merely the malice, the rancour of the once poor boy against the master who has enriched him and has moreover (this was in keeping with the character and still more with the vocabulary of M. de Charlus) made him feel the difference of their positions, that had made Charlie turn to Saint-Loup in order to add to the Baron's sorrows. He may also have had an eye to his own profit. I formed the impression that Robert must be giving him a great deal of money. After an evening party at which I had met Robert before I went down to Combray, and where the manner in which he displayed himself by the side of a lady of fashion who was reputed to be his mistress, in which he attached himself to her, never leaving her for a moment, enveloped publicly in

the folds of her skirt, made me think, but with an additional nervous trepidation, of a sort of involuntary rehearsal of an ancestral gesture which I had had an opportunity of observing in M. de Charlus, when he appeared to be robed in the finery of Mme. Molé or some other woman, the banner of a gynaecophil cause which was not his own but which he loved, albeit without having the right to flaunt it thus, whether because he found it useful as a protection or aesthetically charming, I had been struck, as we came away, by the discovery that this young man, so generous when he was far less rich, had become so stingy. That a man clings only to what he possesses, and that he who used to scatter money when he so rarely had any now hoards that with which he is amply supplied, is no doubt a common enough phenomenon, and yet in this instance it seemed to me to have assumed a more individual form. Saint-Loup refused to take a cab, and I saw that he had kept a tramway transfer-ticket. No doubt in so doing Saint-Loup was exercising, with a different object, talents which he had acquired in the course of his intimacy with Rachel. A young man who has lived for years with a woman is not as inexperienced as the novice for whom the girl that he marries is the first. Similarly, having had to enter into the minutest details of Rachel's domestic economy, partly because she herself was useless as a housekeeper, and afterwards because his jealousy made him determined to keep a firm control over her private life, he was able, in the administration of his wife's property and the management of their household, to continue playing the part with a skill and experience which Gilberte would perhaps have lacked, who gladly relinquished the duties to him.

But no doubt he was doing this principally in order to be able to support Charlie with every penny saved by his cheeseparing, maintaining him in affluence without Gilberte's either noticing or suffering by his peculations. Tears came to my eyes when I reflected that I had felt in the past for a different Saint-Loup an affection which had been so great and which I could see quite well, from the cold and evasive manner which he now adopted, that he no longer felt for me, since men, now that they were capable of arousing his desires, could no longer inspire his friendship. How could these tastes have come to birth in a young man who had been so passionate a lover of woman that I had seen him brought to a state of almost suicidal frenzy because "Rachel, when from the Lord" had threatened to leave him? Had the resemblance between Charlie and Rachel—invisible to me—been the plank which had enabled Robert to pass from his father's tastes to those of his uncle, in order to complete the physiological evolution which even in that uncle had occurred quite late in life? At times however Aimé's words came back to my mind to make me uneasy; I remembered Robert that year at Balbec; he had had a trick, when he spoke to the lift-boy, of not paying any attention to him which strongly resembled M. de Charlus's manner when he addressed certain men. But Robert might easily have derived this from M. de Charlus, from a certain stiffness and a certain bodily attitude proper to the Guermantes family, without for a moment sharing the peculiar tastes of the Baron. For instance, the Duc de Guermantes, who was free from any taint of the sort, had the same nervous trick as M. de Charlus of turning his wrist, as though he were straightening a lace cuff

round it, and also in his voice certain shrill and affected intonations, mannerisms to all of which, in M. de Charlus, one might have been tempted to ascribe another meaning, to which he would have given another meaning himself, the individual expressing his peculiarities by means of impersonal and atavistic traits which are perhaps nothing more than ingrained peculiarities fixed in his gestures and voice. By this latter hypothesis, which borders upon natural history, it would not be M. de Charlus that we ought to style a Guermantes marked with a blemish and expressing it to a certain extent by means of traits peculiar to the Guermantes race, but the Duc de Guermantes who would be in a perverted family the exceptional example, whom the hereditary malady has so effectively spared that the outward signs which it has left upon him lose all their meaning. I remembered that on the day when I had seen Saint-Loup for the first time at Balbec, so fair complexioned, fashioned of so rare and precious a substance, gliding between the tables, his monocle fluttering in front of him, I had found in him an effeminate air which was certainly not suggested by what I was now learning about him, but sprang rather from the grace peculiar to the Guermantes, from the fineness of that Dresden china in which the Duchess too was moulded. I recalled his affections for myself, his tender, sentimental way of expressing it, and told myself that this also, which might have deceived anyone else, meant at the time something quite different, indeed the direct opposite of what I had just learned about him. But from when did the change date? If it had occurred before my return to Balbec, how was it that he had never once come to see the lift-boy, had never once mentioned him

to me? And as for the first year, how could he have paid any attention to the boy, passionately enamoured as he then was of Rachel? That first year, I had found Saint-Loup peculiar, as was every true Guermantes. Now he was even more individual than I had supposed. But things of which we have not had a direct intuition, which we have learned only through other people, we have no longer any opportunity, the time has passed in which we could inform our heart of them; its communications with reality are suspended; and so we cannot profit by the discovery, it is too late. Besides, upon any consideration, this discovery pained me too intensely for me to be able to derive spiritual advantage from it. No doubt, after what M. de Charlus had told me in Mme. Verdurin's house in Paris, I no longer doubted that Robert's case was that of any number of respectable people, to be found even among the best and most intelligent of men. To learn this of anyone else would not have affected me, of anyone in the world save Robert. The doubt that Aimé's words had left in my mind tarnished all our friendship at Balbec and Doncières, and albeit I did not believe in friendship, nor did I believe that I had ever felt any real friendship for Robert, when I thought about those stories of the lift-boy and of the restaurant in which I had had luncheon with Saint-Loup and Rachel, I was obliged to make an effort to restrain my tears.

I should, as it happens, have no need to pause to consider this visit which I paid to the Combray district, which was perhaps the time in my life when I gave least thought to Combray, had it not furnished what was at least a provisional verification of certain ideas which I had formed long ago of the "Guermantes way," and also

a verification of certain other ideas which I had formed of the "Méséglise way." I repeated every evening, in the opposite direction, the walks which we used to take at Combray, in the afternoon, when we went the "Méséglise way." We dined now at Tansonville at an hour at which in the past I had long been asleep at Combray. And this on account of the heat of the sun. And also because, as Gilberte spent the afternoon painting in the chapel attached to the house, we did not take our walks until about two hours before dinner. For the pleasure of those earlier walks which was that of seeing as we returned home the purple sky frame the Calvary or mirror itself in the Vivonne, there was substituted the pleasure of setting forth when dusk had already gathered, when we encountered nothing in the village save the blue-grey, irregular and shifting triangle of a flock of sheep being driven home. Over half the fields night had already fallen; above the evening star the moon had already lighted her lamp which presently would bathe their whole extent. It would happen that Gilberte let me go without her, and I would move forward, trailing my shadow behind me, like a boat that glides across enchanted waters. But as a rule Gilberte came with me. The walks that we took thus together were very often those that I used to take as a child: how, then, could I help feeling far more keenly now than in the past on the "Guermantes way" the conviction that I would never be able to write anything, combined with the conviction that my imagination and my sensibility had grown more feeble, when I found how little interest I took in Combray? And it distressed me to find how little I relived my early years. I found the Vivonne a meagre, ugly

rivulet beneath its towpath. Not that I noticed any material discrepancies of any magnitude from what I remembered. But, separated from the places which I happened to be revisiting by the whole expanse of a different life, there was not, between them and myself, that contiguity from which is born, before even we can perceive it, the immediate, delicious and total deflagration of memory. Having no very clear conception, probably, of its nature, I was saddened by the thought that my faculty of feeling and imagining things must have diminished since I no longer took any pleasure in these walks. Gilberte herself, who understood me even less than I understood myself, increased my melancholy by sharing my astonishment. "What," she would say, "you feel no excitement when you turn into this little footpath which you used to climb?" And she herself had so entirely altered that I no longer thought her beautiful, which indeed she had ceased to be. As we walked, I saw the landscape change, we had to climb hillocks then came to a downward slope. We conversed, very pleasantly for me—not without difficulty however. In so many people there are different strata which are not alike (there were in her her father's character, and her mother's); we traverse first one, then the other. But, next day, their order is reversed. And finally we do not know who is going to allot the parts, to whom we are to appeal for a hearing. Gilberte was like one of those countries with which we dare not form an alliance because of their too frequent changes of government. But in reality this is a mistake. The memory of the most constant personality establishes a sort of identity in the person, with the result that he would not fail to abide by promises

which he remembers even if he has not endorsed them. As for intelligence, it was in Gilberte, with certain absurdities that she had inherited from her mother, very keen. I remember that, in the course of our conversations while we took these walks, she said things which often surprised me greatly. The first was: "If you were not too hungry and if it was not so late, by taking this road to the left and then turning to the right, in less than a quarter of an hour we should be at Guermantes." It was as though she had said: "Turn to the left, then the first turning on the right and you will touch the intangible, you will reach the inaccessibly remote tracts of which we never upon earth know anything but the direction, but" (what I thought long ago to be all that I could ever know of Guermantes, and perhaps in a sense I had not been mistaken) "the 'way.'" One of my other surprises was that of seeing the "source of the Vivonne" which I imagined as something as extra-terrestrial as the Gates of Hell, and which was merely a sort of rectangular basin in which bubbles rose to the surface. And the third occasion was when Gilberte said to me: "If you like, we might go out one afternoon, and then we can go to Guermantes, taking the road by Méséglise, it is the nicest walk," a sentence which upset all my childish ideas by informing me that the two "ways" were not as irreconcilable as I had supposed. But what struck me most forcibly was how little, during this visit, I lived over again my childish years, how little I desired to see Combray, how meagre and ugly I thought the Vivonne. But where Gilberte made some of the things come true that I had imagined about the Méséglise way was during one of those walks which after all were noc-

turnal even if we took them before dinner—for she dined so late. Before descending into the mystery of a perfect and profound valley carpeted with moonlight, we stopped for a moment, like two insects about to plunge into the blue calyx of a flower. Gilberte then uttered, perhaps simply out of the politeness of a hostess who is sorry that you are going away so soon and would have liked to shew you more of a country which you seem to appreciate, a speech of the sort in which her practice as a woman of the world skilled in putting to the best advantage silence, simplicity, sobriety in the expression of her feelings, makes you believe that you occupy a place in her life which no one else could fill. Showering abruptly over her the sentiment with which I was filled by the delicious air, the breeze that was wafted to my nostrils, I said to her: "You were speaking the other day of the little footpath, how I loved you then!" She replied: "Why didn't you tell me? I had no idea of it. I was in love with you. Indeed, I flung myself twice at your head." "When?" "The first time at Tansonville, you were taking a walk with your family, I was on my way home, I had never seen such a dear little boy. I was in the habit," she went on with a vague air of modesty, "of going out to play with little boys I knew in the ruins of the keep of Roussainville. And you will tell me that I was a very naughty girl, for there were girls and boys there of all sorts who took advantage of the darkness. The altar-boy from Combray church, Théodore, who, I am bound to confess, was very nice indeed (Heavens, how charming he was!) and who has become quite ugly (he is the chemist now at Méséglise), used to amuse himself with all the peasant girls of the district.

As they let me go out by myself, whenever I was able to get away, I used to fly there. I can't tell you how I longed for you to come there too; I remember quite well that, as I had only a moment in which to make you understand what I wanted, at the risk of being seen by your people and mine, I signalled to you so vulgarly that I am ashamed of it to this day. But you stared at me so crossly that I saw that you didn't want it." And, all of a sudden, I said to myself that the true Gilberte—the true Albertine—were perhaps those who had at the first moment yielded themselves in their facial expression, one behind the hedge of pink hawthorn, the other upon the beach. And it was I who, having been incapable of understanding this, having failed to recapture the impression until much later in my memory after an interval in which, as a result of our conversations, a dividing hedge of sentiment had made them afraid to be as frank as in the first moments—had ruined everything by my clumsiness. I had lost them more completely—albeit, to tell the truth, the comparative failure with them was less absurd—for the same reasons that had made Saint-Loup lose Rachel.

"And the second time," Gilberte went on, "was years later when I passed you in the doorway of your house, a couple of days before I met you again at my aunt Oriane's, I didn't recognise you at first, or rather I did unconsciously recognise you because I felt the same longing that I had felt at Tansonville." "But between these two occasions there were, after all, the Champs-Elysées." "Yes, but there you were too fond of me, I felt that you were spying upon me all the time." I did not ask her at the moment who the young man was with whom she

had been walking along the Avenue des Champs-Elysées, on the day on which I had started out to call upon her, on which I would have been reconciled with her while there was still time, that day which would perhaps have changed the whole course of my life, if I had not caught sight of those two shadowy forms advancing towards me side by side in the dusk. If I had asked her, I told myself, she would perhaps have confessed the truth, as would Albertine had she been restored to life. And indeed when we are no longer in love with women whom we meet after many years, is there not the abyss of death between them and ourself, just as much as if they were no longer of this world, since the fact that we are no longer in love makes the people that they were or the person that we were then as good as dead? It occurred to me that perhaps she might not have remembered, or that she might have lied to me. In any case, it no longer interested me in the least to know, since my heart had changed even more than Gilberte's face. This last gave me scarcely any pleasure, but what was most striking was that I was no longer wretched, I should have been incapable of conceiving, had I thought about it again, that I could have been made so wretched by the sight of Gilberte tripping along by the side of a young man, and thereupon saying to myself: "It is all over, I shall never attempt to see her again." Of the state of mind which, in that far off year, had been simply an unending torture to me, nothing survived. For there is in this world in which everything wears out, everything perishes, one thing that crumbles into dust, that destroys itself still more completely, leaving behind still fewer traces of itself than Beauty: namely Grief.

And so I am not surprised that I did not ask her then with whom she had been walking in the Champs-Elysées, for I have already seen too many examples of this incuriosity that is brought about by time, but I am a little surprised that I did not tell Gilberte that, before I saw her that evening, I had sold a bowl of old Chinese porcelain in order to buy her flowers. It had indeed been, during the dreary time that followed, my sole consolation to think that one day I should be able without danger to tell her of so delicate an intention. More than a year later, if I saw another carriage bearing down upon mine, my sole reason for wishing not to die was that I might be able to tell this to Gilberte. I consoled myself with the thought: "There is no hurry, I have a whole lifetime in which to tell her." And for this reason I was anxious not to lose my life. Now it would have seemed to me a difficult thing to express in words, almost ridiculous, and a thing that would "involve consequences." "However," Gilberte went on, "even on the day when I passed you in the doorway, you were still just the same as at Combray; if you only knew how little you have altered!" I pictured Gilberte again in my memory. I could have drawn the rectangle of light which the sun cast beneath the hawthorns, the trowel which the little girl was holding in her hand, the slow gaze that she fastened on myself. Only I had supposed, because of the coarse gesture that accompanied it, that it was a contemptuous gaze because what I longed for it to mean seemed to me to be a thing that little girls did not know about and did only in my imagination, during my hours of solitary desire. Still less could I have supposed that so easily, so rapidly,

almost under the eyes of my grandfather, one of them would have had the audacity to suggest it.

Long after the time of this conversation, I asked Gilberte with whom she had been walking along the Avenue des Champs-Elysées on the evening on which I had sold the bowl: it was Léa in male attire. Gilberte knew that she was acquainted with Albertine, but could not tell me any more. Thus it is that certain persons always reappear in our life to herald our pleasures or our griefs.

What reality there had been beneath the appearance on that occasion had become quite immaterial to me. And yet for how many days and nights had I not tormented myself with wondering who the man was, had I not been obliged, when I thought of him, to control the beating of my heart even more perhaps than in the effort not to go downstairs to bid Mamma good-night in that same Combray. It is said, and this is what accounts for the gradual disappearance of certain nervous affections, that our nervous system grows old. This is true not merely of our permanent self which continues throughout the whole duration of our life, but of all our successive selves which after all to a certain extent compose the permanent self.

And so I was obliged, after an interval of so many years, to add fresh touches to an image which I recalled so well, an operation which made me quite happy by shewing me that the impassable gulf which I had then supposed to exist between myself and a certain type of little girl with golden hair was as imaginary as Pascal's gulf, and which I felt to be poetic because of the long series of years at the end of which I was called upon to perform it. I felt a stab of desire and regret when I

thought of the dungeons of Roussainville. And yet I was glad to be able to say to myself that the pleasure towards which I used to strain every nerve in those days, and which nothing could restore to me now had indeed existed elsewhere than in my mind, in reality, and so close at hand, in that Roussainville of which I spoke so often, which I could see from the window of the orris-scented closet. And I had known nothing! In short Gilberte embodied everything that I had desired upon my walks, even my inability to make up my mind to return home, when I thought I could see the tree-trunks part asunder, take human form. The things for which at that time I so feverishly longed, she had been ready, if only I had had the sense to understand and to meet her again, to let me taste in my boyhood. More completely even than I had supposed, Gilberte had been in those days truly part of the "Méséglise way."

And indeed on the day when I had passed her in a doorway, albeit she was not Mlle. de l'Orgeville, the girl whom Robert had met in houses of assignation (and what an absurd coincidence that it should have been to her future husband that I had applied for information about her), I had not been altogether mistaken as to the meaning of her glance, nor as to the sort of woman that she was and confessed to me now that she had been. "All that is a long time ago," she said to me, "I have never given a thought to anyone but Robert since the day of our engagement. And, let me tell you, that childish caprice is not the thing for which I blame myself most."

THE PAST RECAPTURED

"When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past....."

TRANSLATOR'S DEDICATION

To

PEARL HANDELMAN

in grateful recognition
of intelligent cooperation

F. A. B.

CONTENTS

Chapter I page 1
Tansonville

Chapter II page 31
Monsieur de Charlus during the War; His Opinions and His Amusements

Chapter III page 177
The Princesse de Guermantes Receives

THE PAST RECAPTURED

CHAPTER I

Tansonville

THE whole day long, in that rather too countrified house at Tansonville, which had the air merely of a place to rest in when out for a stroll or during a shower, one of those houses in which every drawing-room gives the effect of a summerhouse, and where, in the bedrooms, on the wall paper of one the roses of the garden, and on the wall paper of the other the birds from the trees, have come to join you and keep you company (but singly, at any rate, for they were oldfashioned wall papers, on which each rose was so distinct that it could have been picked if it had been real, and each bird could have been put in a cage and tamed) having none of the pretentious interior decoration of the rooms of the present day, in which, on a silver background, all the apple trees of Normandy stand out sharply in Japanese style, to fill with fantasies the hours spent abed—that whole day I remained in my room, which looked out on the beautiful verdure of the estate and the lilacs at the entrance, on the tall trees at the water's edge, their green foliage glistening in the sunlight, and on the forest of Méséglise. The only reason, at bottom, why I enjoyed looking at all this was because I said to myself, "It is pleasant to have so much verdure at my bedroom window," until suddenly, in the vast, verdant picture, I recognised—but brushed in by contrast in deep blue simply because it was farther away—the spire of the church at Combray, not a representation of that spire, but the spire itself, which, bringing thus before my eyes distance in both space and time, had come and outlined itself on my windowpane in the midst of the luminous foliage but in a very different tone, so dark that it almost seemed as if it had been merely sketched in. And, if I stepped out of my room for a

moment, at the end of the hall, because it faced in a different direction, I caught sight of a band of scarlet, as it were, the wall covering of a small drawing-room which was of simple *mousseline,* but red and quick to burst into flame if a ray of sunlight fell on it.

During our walks together, Gilberte talked to me about the way Robert was losing interest in her, but only to increase his attentions to other women. And it is true that his life was cluttered up with many affairs with women, which, like certain masculine friendships in the lives of men who prefer women, had that air of hopelessly trying to defend their position and uselessly taking up space which, in most houses, characterises objects that can serve no useful purpose.

Once, when I had left Gilberte rather early, I woke in the middle of the night in the room at Tansonville and, still half asleep, called out "Albertine!" It was not because I had been thinking of her or dreaming about her, nor that I confused her with Gilberte. My love for Albertine was gone from my memory, but there seems to be an instinctive memory in the limbs, a pale and sterile imitation of the other memory, but one that lives longer, just as certain non-intelligent animals and vegetables live longer than man. Our arms and legs are full of sleeping memories of the past. A recollection aroused in my arm had made me feel above my head for the little bell, as in my room in Paris. And, not finding it, I had called out "Albertine!", thinking my friend, now dead, was lying there beside me, as she often used to do in the evening, when we would fall asleep together and, on awaking, calculate how long it would be before Françoise could get there and Albertine could safely ring the bell which I was now unable to find.

Robert came to Tansonville several times while I was there. He was very different from the man I had known. The life he lived had not made him stodgier, as in the case of M. de Charlus—far from it; producing a contrary change in him, it had given him more than ever the free and easy air of a cavalry officer—and that, too, although he had quit

the service at the time of his marriage. In proportion as M. de Charlus had become heavier, Robert, shewing the opposite effect of the same vice (of course, he was far younger, but one felt that he would only get nearer to this ideal as he grew older) like some women who resolutely sacrifice their face to their figure and after a certain age never stir from Marienbad, thinking that, since they cannot hope to retain their youth in all its aspects, youthfulness of form can best fill the place of the others—Robert had become more slender and quicker in his movements. This quickness also had various psychological causes, the fear of being seen, the desire not to seem to have this fear, the restlessness that comes from ennui and dissatisfaction with oneself. He was in the habit of frequenting certain low haunts, where, as he did not like to be seen entering or leaving, he would rush in, so as to present as little surface as possible to the unfriendly glances of hypothetical passers-by, as if he were taking the place by storm. And this whirlwind manner had stayed with him. Perhaps also it was an expression of the apparent fearlessness of a man who wishes to shew that he is not afraid, and does not want to give himself time to think.

To make the picture complete, one should take into account his desire to appear young, the older he grew, and even the impatience of a man bored with everything, tired of everything, as are all those who are too intelligent for the relatively idle lives they lead, in which their faculties do not find an outlet. It is true, of course, that the idleness of even these people may take the form of general indifference to everything. But, especially since physical exercise has come into favour, idleness has taken on an athletic form, even outside the hours given to sports, and finds expression in a feverish activity which imagines that it leaves no time or room for ennui to develop.

Becoming much more self-contained, he now scarcely ever shewed any affection toward his friends—toward me, for example. And on the other hand, toward Gilberte he would make a show of tender feelings which he carried so far that

it became ludicrous and unpleasant. Not that he was really indifferent to her. No, he loved her. But he lied to her continually and his deceitful nature, if not the substance of his lies, was constantly laid bare. And then he would think that the only way to get out of the difficulty was by exaggerating to ridiculous proportions the regret he really did feel at hurting Gilberte's feelings. Arriving at Tansonville, for example, he said he would have to leave again the next morning for a business engagement with a certain gentleman of the neighbourhood, who was supposed to be awaiting him in Paris, but who happened to run across them that same evening near Combray and unintentionally exposed the lie (which Robert had neglected to inform him of) by remarking that he had come out to the country to rest for a month and would not go back to Paris until the end of that time. Robert blushed; noticed Gilberte's sad and knowing smile; got rid of the bungler—by insulting him; went home before his wife; sent her a despairing note, in which he told her he had made up a lie in order to avoid hurting her, lest, seeing him go away for a reason he could not explain to her, she might think he did not love her (all of which, although written as a lie, was really true at bottom); then sent to ask if he might come to her room; and there, partly from real sorrow, partly from exasperation with the life he was leading, partly through outright shamming, at which he grew more daring every day, he would sob, douse himself with cold water, talk of dying soon, sometimes fall in a heap on the floor, as if he had fainted. Gilberte did not know how far to believe him, assumed in each case individually that he was lying, was worried by this presentiment of approaching death, but believed that, in a general way, he did love her, that perhaps he had some ailment she did not know about, and for that reason she did not dare oppose him and ask him to give up his trips. So that I was more puzzled than ever to understand why it was that Morel was received like the pet of the household wherever the Saint-Loup couple were, in Paris or Tansonville.

Françoise, who had already seen all that M. de Charlus had done for Jupien and all that Robert de Saint-Loup was doing for Morel, did not infer from this that it was a characteristic which recurred in certain generations of the Guermantes family, but instead—since Legrandin loved Théodore very much—she had finally, although a virtuous person, imbued with moral scruples, concluded that it was a custom so widespread that it had become respectable. She would always say of a young man, whether Morel or Théodore, "He found a gentleman who took a deep interest in him and helped him a great deal." And, since in such a situation it is the protectors who love, suffer and forgive, Françoise did not hesitate, as between them and the minors they were corrupting, to assign the noble rôle to them and credit them with being "big-hearted." She unhesitatingly blamed Théodore, who had done Legrandin many a bad turn, and yet it hardly seemed as if she could have any doubt as to the nature of their relations, for she would add, "Then the lad understood that he must put in something on his side and so he said, 'Take me with you; I will love you and be very good to you.' And, bless me! the gentleman is so good-hearted, it's a sure thing Théodore will certainly be better off with him, perhaps much better off than he deserves, for he's a lightheaded fellow, but the gentleman is so kind that I've often said to Jeannette (Théodore's fiancée): 'My dear, if you're ever in trouble, go to that gentleman. He would willingly sleep on the floor and give you his bed. He has been too fond of young Théodore to turn him out of the house; it's certain he'll never go back on him'."

It was in the course of one of these conversations that, having asked the last name of Théodore, who was now living in the south of France, I suddenly realised that it was he who had sent me that letter about my *Figaro* article, written in an undistinguished hand but a charming style, and signed with a name which was at that time unknown to me.

In like manner, she had a higher regard for Saint-Loup than for Morel and was of the opinion that, in spite of all the

strange things Morel had done, the Marquis would never leave him in difficulties, for he had too much heart for that, or else it would be only after he had himself suffered heavy reverses.

Saint-Loup used to insist on my staying at Tansonville and once, although he no longer openly sought to please me, he unwittingly let me know that my coming had given his wife such pleasure that, according to what she had told him, she had been beside herself with joy for an entire evening, one day when she was feeling so depressed that my unexpected arrival had miraculously saved her from despair, "perhaps from something worse," he added. He would ask me to try to convince her that he loved her, telling me that he cared less for the other woman he loved and was going to break off relations with her. "And yet," he added, with such a feline manner and such a need of confiding in someone that I expected at times that the name "Charlie" would pop out in spite of him, like a number at a lottery drawing, "I had good reason to be proud. This woman who gave me so many proofs of her affection and whom I am going to sacrifice for Gilberte's sake, had never paid attention to any man and believed herself incapable of falling in love. I am the first. I knew that she had rejected all advances so completely that, when I got the adorable letter in which she told me she could not be happy without me, I could not get over my surprise. You can see that it would be enough to turn my head if it were not unbearable to me to think of seeing poor little Gilberte in tears. Don't you think there's something of Rachel about her?" he asked me. And, in fact, I had been struck with a vague resemblance which, at a pinch, one could find between them now. Perhaps this came from a real similarity in certain features (due, for example, to their Jewish origin, so inconspicuous, however, in Gilberte) on account of which Robert, when his family wanted him to get married, had felt drawn toward Gilberte. It was caused also by the fact that Gilberte, having run across some photographs of Rachel, tried to please Robert by imitating certain

habits dear to the actress, such as always having red bows in her hair or a black velvet ribbon on her arm; also she dyed her hair to look like a brunette. Then, realising that her unhappy moods were spoiling her looks, she tried to offset this. Sometimes she overdid it. One day, when Robert was expected in the evening for a twenty-four-hour stay at Tansonville, I was astonished to see her come to the table looking so strangely different not only from her old-time self, but even from her everyday appearance that I sat there dumbfounded as if I had had in front of me an actress, a sort of Theodora. I was conscious that, in spite of myself, I was looking at her too steadily, out of curiosity to discover what there was about her that had changed. This curiosity was, moreover, soon satisfied when she used her handkerchief, for, notwithstanding all her precautions, I saw by the colours that came off liberally on her handkerchief, turning it into a well stocked palette, that she was all painted up. That was what gave her that blood-red mouth, to which she tried to give a laughing expression, thinking it was becoming to her, and all the while, as train-time drew nearer and she did not know whether her husband would really come or whether he might not send one of those telegrams of which M. de Guermantes had so wittily established the model, "Can't Come Lie Follows," her cheeks became paler and the rings under her eyes darker. "Ah, let me tell you," he said to me, in a tone of forced tenderness so different from his former spontaneous affection and with the voice of a hard drinker and the inflexions of an actor, "Gilberte happy—there's nothing I wouldn't give for that. She has done so much for me. You can never know." And the most disagreeable thing about all this was the conceit of it, for Saint-Loup felt flattered to be loved by Gilberte and, without having the courage to say that it was Morel he loved, nevertheless, in talking about the affection which the violinist was supposed to have for him, he would give details that he must have known to be exaggerated, if not wholly imaginary, since Morel demanded more money of him every day. And so he would leave

Gilberte in my care when he went back to Paris. Furthermore (to get a little ahead of my story, since I am still at Tansonville) I had a chance once in Paris to observe him from a distance at a social gathering where his conversation, full of life and charm in spite of everything, brought the past back to me. I was struck to see how much he was changing. He was coming to resemble his mother more and more. But the air of haughty slenderness which he had inherited from her and which was perfect in her case, in him was overdone and stilted because of a most finished social training; the penetrating glance peculiar to the Guermantes family gave him the air of inspecting every place he passed through, but almost unconsciously, by a sort of habit and physical peculiarity; even when he was motionless, that colouring, more marked in him than in any other of the Guermantes, like the sunshine of a golden day solidified, gave him, as it were, such a strange plumage, transformed him into such a unique and priceless specimen that one would have liked to own it for an ornithological collection; but when this flash of light transmuted into a bird also put itself in motion, in action, when, for example, I saw Robert de Saint-Loup come into a gathering where I was, he had such a way of throwing back his head, gaily and proudly crested with its tuft of golden hair a bit thinned out, and such proud and coquettish suppleness in the movements of his neck—like no other human being—that, seeing the curiosity and admiration, partly social and partly zoological, which he aroused, you wondered whether you were in the Faubourg Saint-Germain or at the Zoological Garden, and whether you were watching some noble lord walk across a salon or some wonderful bird walk about in its cage. And with ever so little imagination, the bird's song lent itself to this interpretation as readily as did his plumage. He conversed in what he thought was the most elegant style, thereby imitating the manner of the Guermantes family, but an indefinable something turned it into the manner of M. de Charlus. "I am going to leave you a moment," he said to me at that affair, Mme. de

Marsantes being a short distance away. "I am going to make love to my niece for a few minutes." As for this love he was always talking to me about, there was more to it, by the way, than merely his love for Charlie, although that was the only one that counted for him. Whatever be the nature of a man's love affairs, folk always go wrong as to the number of people he has liaisons with because they mistake mere friendships for liaisons, which constitutes an error through addition, but also because they think that one known liaison excludes any others, which is an error of a different sort. Two people may say, "X's mistress . . . I know her," and mention two different names and neither of them be mistaken. A woman we love seldom satisfies all our needs and we are untrue to her with a mistress we do not love. As for the type of love affair Saint-Loup had inherited from M. de Charlus, a husband who has that inclination usually makes his wife very happy. The Guermantes men managed to be an exception to this general rule because those of them who had a liking for that sort of thing tried to make people think that, on the contrary, they preferred women. They openly paraded their relations with one woman or another and drove their own wives to despair. The Courvoisier men acted more wisely. Young Vicomte de Courvoisier believed himself to be the only person on earth and since the beginning of the world to be tempted by someone of his own sex. Imagining that this tendency came to him from the devil, he struggled against it, married a very beautiful wife, had children by her . . . Then one of his cousins pointed out to him that this penchant is rather widespread and went so far in his kindness as to take the Viscount to places where he could indulge it. M. de Courvoisier did not love his wife any the less; he redoubled his prolific zeal and they were cited as the best-mated couple in Paris. People did not say as much of the Saint-Loup *ménage* because Robert, instead of contenting himself with inversion, tortured his wife with jealousy by seeking mistresses in whom he found no pleasure.

It may be that Morel, being exceedingly dark-complex-

ioned, was necessary to Saint-Loup, as the shadow is to the ray of sunlight. One easily pictures to oneself in this very ancient family a noble lord, light-complexioned, golden-haired, intelligent, blessed with every kind of prestige and hiding in the depths of his soul, unknown to everyone, a secret predilection for Negroes. Robert, be it said, never allowed the conversation to touch on the kind of love to which he was addicted. If I said a word, "Oh, I don't know," he would reply, with such complete lack of interest that he would let his monocle drop. "I haven't the slightest notion of such things. If you want any information about that, *my dear fellow,* I advise you to apply elsewhere. As for me, I'm a soldier and nothing more. I'm as little interested in such matters as I am deeply interested in following the Balkan War. That used to interest you, too, accounts of battles. I used to tell you then that we would see again, even under very different conditions, battles of the standard types—for example, the great flank-turning attempt at the Battle of Ulm. Very well, different though these Balkan wars are, Lullé-Burgas is Ulm all over again—turning the flank. Those are the subjects you can discuss with me. But as for the sort of thing you were referring to, I know as little about that as I do about Sanskrit." These subjects, which Robert scorned in this way, Gilberte, on the other hand, as soon as he had left, was glad to take up in her talks with me. Not, of course, with reference to her husband, for she was unaware of all that—or pretended to be. But she liked to go into them at length as far as others were concerned, whether because she saw therein a sort of indirect excuse for Robert, or because the latter, vacillating, like his uncle, between strict silence on these topics and a need to unbosom himself and speak ill of others, had given her a great deal of information on the subject. Along with the rest of them, M. de Charlus was not spared; this was doubtless because Robert, without mentioning Morel to Gilberte, could not resist repeating to her in one form or another what was told him by the violinist, who pursued his former benefactor

with relentless hate. These discussions, to which Gilberte was so prone, gave me an opportunity to ask whether Albertine (whose name Gilberte had been the first to mention to me years before, when they were classmates) had a similar inclination in a parallel field. Gilberte refused to give me this information. And anyhow, it had long since ceased to have any interest for me. But I continued to inquire about it mechanically, like an old man who, his memory failing, asks from time to time for news of the son he has lost.

Another time I returned to the subject and again asked Gilberte whether Albertine had a love for women. "Oh no, not at all!" "But you used to say she was rather fast." "What! I said that? You must be mistaken. Anyhow, if I did say it—but you are wrong—on the contrary, I was talking of trifling love affairs with young men. And besides, at that age it probably didn't go very far anyhow."

Did Gilberte say this in order to hide from me the fact that she herself, according to what Albertine had told me, loved women and had made advances to Albertine? Or perhaps (for other people are often better informed about our lives than we think) she knew that I had loved, and been jealous of, Albertine and (since it is possible for other people to know more of the truth than we think, but to apply it too widely and make the mistake of assuming too much just when we were hoping they were making the mistake of not assuming anything at all) she supposed I was still jealous and she was merely trying to blindfold me with the bandage people always have ready for jealous folk. Either way, Gilberte's remarks, from the "fast" ways she used to hint at to her present guarantee of good character and habits, followed a line of development quite opposite to the statements of Albertine, who in the end had very nearly admitted partial relations with Gilberte. Albertine had astonished me by that admission, since, on the strength of what Andrée had told me (for at first, before I got to know "the little band," I had supposed them all to be perverts) I had come to believe that my suppositions were false, as so often happens

when we find a respectable young girl, knowing almost nothing of the realities of love, in what we had wrongly thought to be the most thoroughly depraved environment. Then I had gone back over my thoughts, taking up once more as true my earlier suppositions. But perhaps Albertine had said that because she wanted to seem more experienced than she was and impress me in Paris with the glamour of her perverted habits, as she had the first time at Balbec with her virtuous character. And simply so as not to look as if she did not know what was meant when I talked to her about women who loved other women, just as, when someone in a conversation mentions Fourrier or Tobolsk, we assume a knowing air, although we have no idea what they mean. She had perhaps lived with Mlle. Vinteuil's woman friend and Andrée, but separated from them by a water-tight bulkhead, as it were, they not thinking she was one of their kind, and—like a woman who, having married a literary man, tries to improve her mind—she had then sought information on the subject merely to fall in with my ideas by equipping herself to answer my questions, till one day she came to see that they were inspired by jealousy and she stopped then and there—unless it was Gilberte who lied to me. The idea then came to me that it was as a result of learning from the latter, in the course of a flirtation which he had presumably been carrying on in the special way that interested him, that she did not detest women, that Robert had married her, hoping for pleasures which he must have failed to get, since he went outside his home for them. None of these suppositions was absurd, for women like Odette's daughter or the young girls of "the little band" have such a mass and variety of alternating—perhaps, even sometimes simultaneous—inclinations that the young women pass easily from a liaison with a woman to a serious love affair with a man, so that in the end it is hard to say which is the real, dominating inclination. It was in that way Albertine had tried to please me in order to get me to make up my mind to marry her, but had herself given up the

idea because of my vacillating, nagging disposition. It was with just that over-simplified formula that I explained my experience with Albertine, now that I looked at it only objectively.

One curious thing, which I cannot go into at length, was the way in which, at about this time, all the people Albertine had loved, all those who might have gotten her to do anything they wished, asked, pleaded, I may even say begged, if not for my friendship, at least for my acquaintance. It would no longer have been necessary for me to offer money to Mme. Bontemps to persuade Albertine to return to me. This strange turn of affairs, occurring when it was no longer of any use, made me very sad, not because of Albertine, whom I would have received without joy if she had been brought back to me, not from Touraine this time, but from the other world, but because of a young woman I was in love with and could not find a way to meet. I said to myself that, if she should die or if I should cease to love her, then all the people who might have brought us together would be throwing themselves at my feet. But as it was, I was trying in vain to put some pressure on them, not having been cured by experience, which ought to have taught me—if it ever taught anything—that being in love is like being under an evil spell, such as those in fairy stories, against which one can do nothing until it is broken.

"It just happens," continued Gilberte, "that the book I have here touches on that subject. It's an old Balzac I'm ploughing through so as to keep up with my uncles, *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*. But it's absurd, improbable, a beautiful nightmare.

"Besides, a woman might, perhaps, be watched over in that way by another woman, but never by a man." "You're mistaken; I knew a woman whom her lover had succeeded in literally isolating from the world; she could never see anyone and never went out except with devoted attendants." "Well, that ought to horrify you, you're so kind-hearted. We were just discussing with Robert the idea that you

ought to get married. Your wife would get you well again and you would make her very happy." "No, I have too bad a disposition." "What an idea!" "It's true, I assure you! Besides, I was engaged once, but I couldn't go through with it."

I was not willing to borrow *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or* from Gilberte because she was reading it. But the last evening I stayed at her house, she lent me a book that left a rather keen though confused impression on my mind. It was a volume of the unpublished journal of the Goncourt brothers.

I was feeling sad that last evening, as I went up to my room, to think that I had not once gone to revisit the church at Combray, which seemed to be waiting for me, surrounded by green foliage in a violet-hued window. I said to myself, "Never mind, I'll do it another year if I don't die before then," not imagining any other obstacle but my death and not dreaming of the possible destruction of the church, which seemed to me destined to exist long after my death, as it had existed long before my birth.

When, before putting out my candle, I read the passage which I reproduce below, my lack of qualifications for a literary career, dimly felt years before along the Guermantes way and definitely proved during this visit which had now come to its last evening—when, as usually happens the night before going away, one's habits, nearing their end, lose their benumbing power and one tries to "take stock of oneself"—appeared to me a less regrettable thing, as if literature did not reveal any profound truth, and at the same time it seemed to me sad that literature was not what I had thought it to be. On the other hand, the ill health which was going to shut me up in a sanitarium appeared to me less unfortunate if the fine things spoken about in books were not finer than what I had seen. But, by a strange contradiction, now that this book mentioned them, I felt a desire to see them. Here are the pages that I read until fatigue closed my eyes:

"Day before yesterday, there suddenly dropped in, to take me home to dinner with him, Verdurin, former critic of *La*

Revue, author of that book on Whistler in which truly the peculiar style and colour technique of the unique American artist are frequently conveyed with great delicacy by that devotee of all refinements and prettinesses in the line of painting. And while I am dressing to go with him, he runs on with a long tale in which one detects at times, as it were, a timid, faltering confession as to his having, immediately upon his marriage to Fromentin's 'Madeleine', given up writing, apparently on account of the morphine habit—one result, according to him, being that most of the persons who regularly attended his wife's salon, not having the least idea that her husband had ever done any writing, talked to her about Charles Blanc, Saint-Victor, Sainte-Beuve, Burty, as if they were individuals whom they considered in every way superior to him. 'Now, Goncourt, you know, and Gautier also knew, that my salons were very different from these pitiful *Old Masters* regarded in my wife's family as a masterpiece.' Then, in a twilight that sheds about the towers of the Trocadéro the dying glow of a light which gives them exactly the appearance of the towers coated with currant jelly which the old-time pastry cooks used to make, the conversation continues in the carriage that is to take us to Quai Conti, where is their residence, claimed by its owner to be the former mansion of the Venetian ambassadors and said to contain a smoking-room that Verdurin describes to me as having been transported intact, *Arabian Nights* fashion, from a famous *palazzo,* the name of which I have forgotten, with a well-curb representing a crowning of the Virgin, which Verdurin maintains is positively some of the finest work of Sansovino and which he says serves as an ash-receiver for their guests. And, indeed, when we get there, in the diffused, glaucous moonlight, truly like that which classic painting puts over Venice and against which the silhouette of the cupola of the Institute reminds one of the Santa Maria della Salute in Guardi's pictures, I have somewhat the illusion of being on the bank of the Grand Canal. This illusion is sustained by the construction of the mansion, from the second

story of which the quay is not visible, and also by the reminiscent remarks of the master of the house, as he declares that the name of the Rue du Bac—I'll be hanged if I had ever given it a thought—came from the ferry by means of which some nuns of olden time, the Miramiones, used to betake themselves to the services at Notre-Dame. All through that section of the city I idled my childhood years away when my Aunt de Courmont lived there, and now I begin to love it all over again when I discover, almost next door to the Verdurins', the sign of the 'Little Dunkerque', one of the few shops which have survived otherwise than vignetted in the charcoal sketches and wash drawings of Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, and where the art-loving eighteenth century used to come and pass its idle moments bargaining over the French and foreign novelties and 'all the newest things produced by the arts,' as reads a billhead of this 'Little Dunkerque' of which Verdurin and I are, I believe, the only persons to own proofs and which is, indeed, one of the fugitive masterpieces of decorated paper on which the reign of Louis XV used to keep its accounts, with a heading representing a very turbulent sea, swarming with ships, its waves looking like an illustration from the *Édition des Fermiers Généraux de l'Huître et des Plaideurs*. The lady of the house, who will shortly seat me beside her, tells me amiably that she has decorated her table exclusively with Japanese chrysanthemums, arranged in vases which apparently are extremely rare works of art, one of them being made of bronze, on which petals of reddish copper seem to have been shed from the living flower. I find there Cottard, the doctor, and his wife, the Polish sculptor Viradobetski, Swann, the art collector, a Russian lady of rank, a princess with a name in *-or* that escapes me —Cottard whispers in my ear that she is said to have fired point-blank at Archduke Rudolf, and according to her, in Galicia and all the north of Poland, I enjoy an absolutely unique position, since a young girl never consents to promise her hand in marriage without finding out whether her fiancé is an admirer of *La Faustin.*

"'You Occidentals cannot understand that,' the Princess (who, indeed, gives the impression of an altogether superior intelligence) declares by way of conclusion, 'a writer penetrating into a woman's intimate life.' A man with clean-shaven chin and lip and the side-whiskers of a butler, retailing in a condescending tone the jokes of a high-school teacher hobnobbing with the best students of his class on Saint-Charlemagne's Day turns out to be Brichot, the university professor. When my name is mentioned by Verdurin, not a word comes from him to indicate that he knows of our books, and an angry feeling of discouragement is aroused in me by this conspiracy organised against us by the Sorbonne, bringing even into this friendly home where I am being entertained the discordance, the hostility of a studied silence. We go in to dinner, and then begins an extraordinary procession of dishes which are simply masterpieces of the art of the porcelain maker, concerning which the artistic small talk during an exquisite repast is most agreeably listened to by the flattered attention of the lover of fine China—Yung-Tsching plates with nasturtium-red borders, bluish, turgid petals of water iris, the dawn streaking, with truly decorative effect, across a flight of kingfishers and cranes, a dawn having precisely the matutinal tones which I glance at every day, on awaking, in my Boulevard Montmorency home—dishes of Dresden ware, more affected in the gracefulness of their design, with the drowsiness, the anemia of their violet-tinted roses, the deep purple markings of a tulip, the rococo effect of a pink or a forget-me-not—Sèvres dishes latticed with the fine network of their white flutings, with whorls of gold, or knotted with the graceful contrast of a golden ribbon against the creamy tone of the porcelain—and finally, a whole set of silver plate entwined with myrtles of Luciennes which the Du Barry would recognise. And what is perhaps equally rare is the truly remarkable quality of what is served in these dishes, finely prepared foods, a whole feast such as Parisians, it should be loudly proclaimed, never have at the most fashionable dinners and which recall to my mind certain expert

cooks of Jean d'Heurs. Even the *foie gras* bears no resemblance to the insipid froth customarily served under that name; and I know few places where a simple potato salad is made as here, with potatoes as firm as Japanese ivory buttons and with the patina of those little ivory spoons with which Chinese women pour water over the fish they have just caught. The Venetian goblet in front of me is filled with a rich assortment of red jewels by the remarkable Léoville purchased at M. Montalivet's sale; and it is a delight to the visual imagination and also, I am not afraid to say, to the imagination of what used to be called the gullet, to see brought on a turbot having no relation to the stale turbots served at the most luxurious tables, with the outline of their backbones shewing through their flesh as a result of their long journeyings—a turbot served, not with the flour paste which so many chefs in wealthy houses prepare under the name of 'white sauce', but genuine white sauce, made with butter costing five francs a pound—to see this turbot brought in on a marvellous Tching-Hon platter, barred with the purple bands of a setting sun above a sea in which swims past, with comical movements, a group of lobsters, their noduled markings so remarkably reproduced that they seem to have been molded on the living carapace, the marly of the platter representing a little Chinaman endeavouring to catch with hook and line a fish whose silver-blue belly is an enchantment of nacreous colour. When I comment to Verdurin on the exquisite pleasure he must derive from these refined dishes served in a collection such as no prince today treasures behind the glass of his cabinets, the mistress of the house interjects in a melancholy tone, 'It's easy to see you don't know him'; and she talks to me of her husband as a queer freak, indifferent to all these pretty refinements, 'a freak,' she repeats, 'yes, just that, a freak who would get more satisfaction out of a bottle of cider drunk in the slightly ribald coolness of a Norman farm.' And the charming woman, whose language shews a true love for the colourings of a countryside, talks to us with exuberant enthusiasm about

that Normandy where they have lived, a Normandy which she depicts as an immense English private estate, with the fragrance of its timber forests *à la* Lawrence, the velvet of its cryptomeria, within their porcelain-like border of pink hortensias, its natural lawns, the riotous mass of yellow roses falling over a peasant doorway, where the inlay of two intertwined pear trees resembles a very ornamental sign with the free fall of a blossoming branch on a bronze fixture by Gouthière, a Normandy apparently quite unsuspected by Parisians on vacation and protected by the gate of each enclosed piece of land, which gates the Verdurins confess to me they have unfailingly opened. At the end of the day, in a dreamy dying away of all the colours, with no light save that coming from an almost curdled sea which had the bluish tint of whey—'Oh, no, not at all the sea you know,' my neighbour protests vehemently in reply to my remark that Flaubert had taken my brother and me to Trouville, 'not at all, absolutely; you will have to come with me, otherwise you will never know'—they would return home through veritable forests formed by the rhododendrons with their flowers of pink tulle, completely intoxicated with the garden perfumes, which gave the husband dreadful attacks of asthma, 'yes,' she insisted, 'absolutely so, genuine attacks of asthma.'

"And then, the following summer they would return, housing a whole colony of artists in an admirable medieval dwelling provided by an ancient cloister which they rented for a song. And, indeed, while I listen to this woman—who, although she has passed through so many distinguished *milieux*, has still retained in her language a little of the racy speech of a woman of the people, a language that brings objects before you with the colour that your imagination sees in them—my mouth waters for the life she confesses they led there, each working in his cell, and in the drawing-room, so huge that it had two fireplaces, all coming together before luncheon for conversation of a very high order, combined with parlour games and recalling to my mind the *causeries* depicted by Diderot in that masterpiece, his letters to Mlle.

Volland. Then, after luncheon, everybody would go out, even on rainy days, when the sun came out, the glistening of a shower striating with its luminous filtering the gnarled limbs of a magnificent clump of century-old beeches which supplied at the gateway the verdant beauty fancied by the eighteenth century, and the shrubs, holding raindrops like flower-buds suspended in their branches. They would stop to listen to the dainty splashing of a bullfinch, enamoured of the coolness, bathing in the corolla of a white rose, shaped like an exquisite miniature Nymphenburg bath tub. And when I mention to Mme. Verdurin the landscapes and flowers of that region done in delicate pastels by Elstir, 'Why, it was I who introduced him to all that,' she exclaims, with an angry toss of the head, 'all of it, you understand, the interesting spots, all the motifs—I threw it up to him when he left us, didn't I, Auguste?—all the motifs he painted. As for the objects, he had always known them—that I must do him the justice to admit. But when it comes to the flowers, he had never seen any; he could not tell a marshmallow from a hollyhock. It was I who taught him—you are not going to believe this—to recognise the jasmine.' And it must be admitted that there is something odd in the thought that the painter of flowers whom all art-lovers today point to as the foremost, superior even to Fantin-Latour, perhaps would never, but for this woman here, have been able to paint a jasmine. 'Yes, I give you my word, the jasmine. All the roses he painted were done at my house or I took them to him. We called him simply "Monsieur Tiche" at our house; ask Cottard, Brichot and all the others whether he was treated as a celebrity here. He himself would have laughed at the idea. I taught him how to arrange his flowers; at the start he could not manage it. He never did know how to make a bouquet. He had no natural taste in selecting; I had to say to him, "No, don't paint that, it isn't worth the trouble; paint this." Ah, if he had only listened to us also in the arranging of his life, as he did in the arranging of his flowers, and if he hadn't made that disgusting mar-

riage!' And brusquely, her eyes feverishly absorbed in a revery directed toward the past, with her irritable chaffing and nervous stretching of her finger joints and toying with the flowing part of her sleeves, the lines of her posture of suffering made an admirable picture which I think has never been painted, in which could be read all the suppressed revolt, all the infuriated susceptibilities of a friend outraged in her woman's shame and sense of delicacy.

And thereupon she talks to us concerning the admirable portrait Elstir did for her of the Cottard family (which she gave to the Luxembourg at the time of her falling-out with the painter) admitting that it was she who gave the painter the idea of doing the man in full dress in order to get all that fine expanse of linen, and who selected the woman's velvet gown, which supplied something substantial in the midst of the dazzling effect of the bright-coloured rugs, the flowers and fruits, the gauze dresses of the little girls, looking like ballet dancers' skirts. Apparently it was she also who suggested the idea of representing the woman in the act of doing her hair, an idea for which the artist later received the credit, and which amounted, in short, to painting her, not on show, but caught in her intimate, everyday life. 'I said to him, "But in the woman doing her hair or wiping her face or warming her feet, when she thinks she is not being observed, there are a lot of interesting movements of a Leonardo-like grace."' However, at a sign from Verdurin hinting that the reawakening of these feelings of indignation was harmful to his wife, who was at bottom a very nervous woman, Swann admiringly called my attention to the necklace of black pearls worn by our hostess, who had purchased them, pure white, at the sale of a descendant of Mme. de La Fayette, to whom they were said to have been given by Henriette d'Angleterre —having turned black as a result of a fire that destroyed a part of the house occupied by the Verdurins in a street the name of which I cannot remember, the casket being recovered after the fire with the pearls inside, but now quite black. 'And I know the portrait of those pearls, on the very

shoulders of Mme. de La Fayette, yes, precisely,' Swann insisted, in reply to the somewhat amazed exclamations of the guests, 'their actual portrait in the Duc de Guermantes' collection.' A collection without an equal in the world, he announces, and one I ought to go to see, inherited by the celebrated Duke, who was her favourite nephew, from his aunt, Mme. de Beausergent, later Mme. d'Hayfeld, sister of the Marquise de Villeparisis and the Princess of Hanover. My brother and I used to be so fond of him in the person of the charming little boy called Basin, which is, in fact, the Duke's first name. Thereupon Dr. Cottard, with a tact which reveals in him the thoroughly well bred man, goes back to the story of the pearls and informs us that catastrophes of that sort produce in people's brains changes entirely similar to those one notices in inanimate matter, and he cites in a way really more philosophical than would many doctors, Mme. Verdurin's own footman, who in the terror of this fire, in which he almost perished, became a totally different man, his handwriting so changed that, when his employers, then in Normandy, received his first letter telling them what had happened, they thought it was the prank of some practical joker. And it was not only his handwriting that changed, according to Cottard, who maintains that, formerly a sober man, he became such a terrible drunkard that Mme. Verdurin had to discharge him. And, at a gracious signal from our hostess, this stimulating discussion was transferred from the dining-room to the Venetian smoking-room, where Cottard told of some genuine instances of dual personality he had witnessed and cited the case of one of his patients, whom he very kindly offered to bring to see me, whom one needed merely to touch on the temples in order to awaken him into a second existence, during which he has no recollection of his other life, and this goes so far that, although an honourable man in his original state, he is reported to have been arrested several times for thefts committed under his second personality, in which he is said to be simply an abominable rascal. At that, Mme. Verdurin keenly remarks that medi-

cine could supply truer themes for a theatre in which the farcical humour of the plot would be based on pathological misunderstandings, and this, leading from one thing to another, brings Mme. Cottard to tell how just such a situation was employed by a layman who is her children's bed-time favourite, Stevenson, the Scot—a name which calls forth from Swann the peremptory assertion, 'Why, he is a thoroughly great writer, I assure you, monsieur Goncourt, very great, on a par with the greatest.' And when, in the midst of my marvelling at the ceiling of the room where we are smoking, with its escutcheoned panels brought from the former Palazzo Barberini, I indicate regret at the gradual blackening of a certain fountain basin by the ashes of our cigars, Swann having told how similar stains on books that belonged to Napoleon I, now owned by the Duc de Guermantes, despite his antibonapartist opinions, are evidence that the Emperor chewed tobacco, Cottard, who shews himself a penetrating student in every field, declares that those stains do not come from that at all, 'No indeed, not at all,' he insists with an authoritative air, 'but from his habit of always carrying in his hand, even on the battlefield, licorice tablets to quiet the pains in his liver. For he had a disease of the liver and that is what he died of,' the doctor concludes."

I stopped there because I was leaving in the morning and, besides, the hour had come when I must report to that other master in whose service we are for half of our time every day. The work he requires of us we perform with our eyes shut. Every morning he returns us to our other master, knowing that otherwise we would do our work for him poorly. When our mind has opened its eyes again, the shrewdest among us, the instant our task is finished, inquisitive to know what, indeed, we can have been doing in the house of the master who makes his slaves lie down before sending them headlong to their work, try slyly to take a look at it. But sleep races ahead of them to obliterate the traces of what they wish to see. And, after so many centuries, we know very little on this subject.—So I closed the Goncourt

journal. Magical power of literature! I felt a desire to see the Cottards again, to ask them many details about Elstir, visit the "Little Dunkerque" shop if still in existence, get permission to go through that mansion of the Verdurins where I had dined. But I felt a vague uneasiness. It is true, I had never shut my eyes to the fact that I was unable to listen, or even to observe as soon as I was no longer alone; an old woman did not present to my eyes a pearl necklace of any sort and what people said about it did not penetrate my ears. And yet, I had known those individuals in everyday life; I had often dined with them; there were the Verdurins, the Duc de Guermantes, the Cottards; each of them had seemed as ordinary to me as Basin to my grandmother, who little suspected that he was the favourite nephew, the charming young hero of Mme. de Beausergent; each of them had seemed insipid to me; I remembered the countless inelegances of which each of them was composed.

Et que tout cela fît un astre dans la nuit!!!

I determined to ignore for the time being any objections to literature which these pages from the Goncourt brothers might have raised in my mind. Even leaving out of account the ingenuousness so strikingly shewn by the author of those memoirs, I could reassure myself in several other ways. In the first place, as far as I was personally concerned, my inability to observe and listen, of which the journal quoted had given me such a painful illustration, was, however, not absolute. There was in me one person who was able to observe fairly well, but he functioned intermittently, coming to life only when there was disclosed some general characteristic common to several things, which constituted his sustenance and delight. Then this person would observe and listen, but only a limited distance below the surface, so that the observation did not gain thereby. Like a geometrician who, stripping things of their perceptible qualities, sees only their linear substratum, what people said escaped me because what interested me was not what they wanted to say, but the way

they said it in so far as it revealed their characters or their ludicrous traits; or, rather, there was one thing which had always been the object of my investigation because it gave me a very special pleasure, and that was the point that two human beings had in common. It was only when I caught sight of this that my mind—until then drowsing even behind the seeming activity of my conversation, the liveliness of which masked from others a state of complete mental torpidity—suddenly took up the chase joyfully, but what it then pursued—for example, the identical recurrence of the Verdurin salon in various times and places—was located half-way down, below the range of vision, in a zone somewhat recessed. And thus the visible, reproducible charm of people escaped me because I no longer possessed the faculty of confining my attention to it, like the surgeon who, under the glistening whiteness of a woman's abdomen, sees the internal disease gnawing away there. It was of no use for me to go out to dinner, I did not see the guests because, when I thought I was looking at them, I was looking through them as with an X-ray. The result was that, when I came to put together all the notes I had been able to make on the guests at a dinner, the pattern of the lines I drew represented a collection of psychological generalisations in which the special interest of the guest's remarks occupied hardly any place. But did that destroy all the value of my portraits inasmuch as I did not offer them as such? If a portrait in the field of painting brings out certain truths with regard to mass, light or motion, does that make it necessarily inferior to another portrait of the same person which does not resemble it at all and in which a thousand details omitted from the first one are minutely recorded, so that one might conclude from the second portrait that the model was a raving beauty, but from the first that she was ugly—a point which may have a documentary and even a historic importance, but which is not necessarily a verity in the realm of art? And then, my frivolous nature, as soon as I was not alone, made me wish to please, more anxious to amuse by gossiping than to learn

by listening, unless I had gone to some social gathering to interrogate people on some question of art or some jealous suspicion which had already taken possession of my mind! But I was unable to see anything a desire for which had not already been aroused in me by something I had read, so that I coveted in advance a sketch of it, which I then wished to set alongside the original. How often—I knew it well, even had that page of Goncourt not enlightened me—have I been unable to fasten my attention on things or people that later on, as soon as an artist had brought their image before me when I was alone, I would have travelled leagues and risked death to see once more. My imagination had then been set in motion, had begun to paint. And whereas something may have made me yawn the year before, I now asked myself, with a gripping of the heart as I thought about it in anticipation and longed for it, "Shall I really be unable to see it? What would I not give for that!" When one reads articles in which people, even mere society people, are described as "the last representatives of a society of which no longer any contemporary exists," one may, of course, exclaim, "To think that they speak of such an insignificant individual with such fulsome praise and that that's the sort of person I would have lamented not having known if I had merely read the newspapers and magazines and not seen the man himself." But I was more tempted, on reading such pages in the newspapers, to think, "How unfortunate that, at the time when I was entirely preoccupied with getting in touch with Gilberte or Albertine again, I did not pay more attention to that gentleman; I took him for a society bore, a supernumerary, and he was a superior person!" The pages of Goncourt that I read made me regret that tendency of mine. For I might, perhaps, have concluded from them that life teaches us to set a lower value on reading and shews us that what the writer praises so highly did not really amount to much; but I might quite as well have concluded that, on the contrary, reading teaches us to set a higher value on life, a value we were not able to estimate and the extent of

which only books make us realise. We can, if need be, console ourselves for having found little pleasure in the society of a Vinteuil or a Bergotte, since the excessively proper middle-class morality of the one and the intolerable shortcomings of the other prove nothing against them, their talent being demonstrated in their works; and the same with the pretentious vulgarity of an Elstir in his earlier manner. Thus the Goncourt journal had disclosed to me that Elstir was none other than the "Monsieur Tiche" * who used to make such exasperating speeches to Swann at the Verdurins'. But what man of talent has not adopted the irritating tricks of speech of the artists of his circle until (as Elstir did, but as rarely happens) he developed a higher standard of good taste? Are not Balzac's letters, for example, strewn with coarse expressions which Swann would have died a thousand deaths rather than employ? And yet it is probable that Swann, refined though he was and free from every detestable absurdity, would have been incapable of writing *La Cousine Bette* or *Le Curé de Tours*. Whether, therefore, it is the memoirs which are wrong in attributing charm to the society of these men, when, as a matter of fact, it was disagreeable to us, is a problem of little importance, since, even if it is the writer of memoirs who is mistaken, that in no way detracts from the value of life, which produces men of such talent and which is to be found quite as truly in the works of Vinteuil, Elstir and Bergotte.

Quite at the other pole of experience, when I saw that the most curious anecdotes, which constitute the inexhaustible material of the Goncourt journal, furnishing enjoyment for the reader's lonely evenings, had been told him by those same guests whom his pages give us a desire to know and yet who had not left in my memory any trace of an interesting recollection, that, too, was not very hard to explain. Notwithstanding the *naïveté* of Goncourt, who inferred from the interest of the anecdotes that the man telling them was probably a distinguished person, it may very well have happened

* In the first volume of this series, this name is spelt "Biche."—*F.A.B.*

that mediocre men had undergone or heard of strange experiences, which they in turn related. Goncourt knew how to listen, as he knew how to observe; I did not. Moreover, all these facts would have had to be considered individually. M. de Guermantes assuredly had not impressed me as being that adorable model of youthful graces whom my grandmother would so much have liked to know and whom she held up to me as an inimitable model, according to Mme. de Beausergent's memoirs. But one must bear in mind that Basin was at that time seven years old, that the author was his aunt and that even a husband who may sue for a divorce a few months later will sing you his wife's praises; one of the prettiest of Sainte-Beuve's poems is devoted to the appearance before a fountain of a young child crowned with every gift and every grace, young Mlle. de Champlâtreux, who could not have been ten years old at the time. Despite all the affectionate veneration which that talented poet, the Comtesse de Noailles felt for her mother-in-law, the Duchesse de Noailles, *née* Champlâtreux, it is possible that, if she had had to make a portrait of her, it would have contrasted rather sharply with the one Sainte-Beuve drew of her fifty years before.

What would, perhaps, have been more disquieting was the midway group, whose reputation implies more worth than does our recollection of them, which has succeeded in retaining a curious anecdote, but without our being able, as in the case of the Vinteuils and the Bergottes, to fall back on their works in order to form our opinion; they have not produced any, they have merely inspired some—to our great surprise, as we had considered them mediocre. One can understand, perhaps, that the drawing-room which, in the art galleries, will give the best impression of elegance since the great paintings of the Renaissance, will be that of the absurd middle-class woman whom, if I had not known her, I would have dreamed of being able to meet in real life, hoping to learn from her the most precious secrets which the painter and his canvas did not give me, and whose magnificent velvet-and-

lace train is a bit of painting comparable to the finest of Titian's work. If, as I had come to realise some time before, it is not the cleverest nor the most learned man, nor the one with the best social connexions who becomes a Bergotte (even though his contemporaries did regard him as less of a wit than Swann and less of a scholar than Bréauté) but the one who knows how to become a mirror and thus is able to reflect his life, however mediocre, one can often say as much, and with more reason, of the models the artist chooses. In the awakening of the love of beauty in the artist who can paint everything, the model of the elegance where he will be able to find such beautiful motifs will be furnished him by people a little richer than he, in whose homes he will find what he does not usually have in his studio of an unappreciated man of talent who sells his canvases for fifty francs—a drawing-room with furniture covered with old silks, many lamps, beautiful flowers, beautiful fruits, beautiful gowns—people in relatively modest circumstances (or who would seem so to real society leaders, ignorant of their very existence) but who, for that reason, are in a better position to meet the obscure artist, appreciate him, entertain him, buy his canvases, than are the members of the aristocracy, who, like the Pope and the heads of state, have their portraits painted by artists who are members of the French Academy. Will not posterity find the poetry of an elegant home and of the beautiful costumes of our time in the salon of the publisher Charpentier, as painted by Renoir, rather than in the portrait of the Princesse de Sagan or the Comtesse de La Rochefoucauld, by Cotte or Chaplin? The artists who have given us the greatest visions of elegance gather their material among people who were seldom the most fashionable folk of their time, for the latter rarely have their portraits painted by the unknown interpreter of a beauty which they are unable to discern in his canvases, obscured, as it is, by a veil of hackneyed, outmoded gracefulness that floats before the eye of the public like the subjective visions which a sick man thinks are actually standing before him. But that these

mediocre models I had known should furthermore have inspired and advised certain effects which had fascinated me, that one or another of them should appear in the pictures as more than a model, rather, indeed, as a friend whom the artist wishes to have figure in his paintings, this was enough to make me wonder whether all the people we are sorry not to have known because Balzac portrayed them in his novels or dedicated his books to them in token of his admiration, and about whom Sainte-Beuve or Baudelaire wrote their prettiest lines—and, with even more reason, all the Récamiers and the Pompadours—would not have seemed to me insignificant individuals, either through a weakness in my own nature (a thought which at that time made me furious at being ill and unable to go and meet again all the people I had underestimated) or because they owed their reputation only to an illusory magical power in literature—a consideration which made necessary a change of dictionary for reading and consoled me for being obliged suddenly any day, because of my increasing ill health, to quit society and give up travel and art galleries, in order to go to a sanitarium for my health. Perhaps, however, this spurious side, this false light exists in the memoirs only when they are too recent, too near to the oral reputations, which, whether cultural or merely social, will later on disappear so quickly (and if scholarship then attempts to resist this burying, does it succeed in saving one out of a thousand from this ever-mounting oblivion?).

These ideas, some of which tended to lessen, others to increase, my regret at having no talent for literature, did not come to mind again during the long years I spent far from Paris, seeking to recover my health in a sanitarium (where, I might add, I had entirely given up the idea of writing) until, in the beginning of 1916, the institution could no longer secure a medical staff. Then I returned to a Paris very different from the one I had revisited once before, in August, 1914, as will shortly be told, for a medical examination, after which I had gone back to my sanitarium.

CHAPTER II

Monsieur de Charlus during the War; His Opinions and His Amusements

ONE of the first evenings after my second return to Paris, in 1916, desiring to listen to discussion of the only thing that interested me at that time, namely, the war, I went out after dinner to call on Mme. Verdurin, for, together with Mme. Bontemps, she was one of the queens of that war-time Paris which reminded one of the Directoire. As if by the scattering of a small amount of yeast of apparently spontaneous generation, young women were going about all day long in high, cylindrical turbans, such as a contemporary of Mme. Tallien might have worn. Shewing their civic spirit by their straight, Egyptian jackets of dark colour, very military-looking, over extremely short skirts, they wore leather puttees resembling the buskin *à la* Talma, or high leggings like those worn by our men at the front; it was, they explained, because they were mindful of their duty to rejoice the sight of those warriors that they still dressed up, not only in soft, clinging gowns, but in jewellery suggesting the army by its decorative theme, if, indeed, the material itself did not come from the army or had not been worked up in the army; instead of Egyptian ornaments recalling the campaign in Egypt, there were rings or bracelets made of fragments of shell or belting from the "75" field-piece, cigarette lighters composed of two English pennies, to which a soldier in his dug-out had succeeded in giving such a fine patina that the profile of Queen Victoria on them looked as if it had been done by Pisanello; and it was likewise, they said, because they had it always in their thoughts that they wore very little mourning when one of their family was killed, on the ground that their sorrow was mingled with pride, an arrangement which, in their indomitable belief in ultimate victory, allowed of a small hat of white English

crêpe (producing a most graceful effect and justifying the hope of various pleasant possibilities) and permitted them to replace the cashmere of former times with satin and *mousseline de soie,* and even to retain their pearls, "while still maintaining the good taste and correct deportment which it is unnecessary to recommend to Frenchwomen."

The Louvre and all the museums were closed and, when one read in a newspaper heading "Sensational Exhibition," one could be sure it had to do with an exhibition of gowns, not pictures, gowns intended, moreover, to awaken "that delicate enjoyment of art of which the Parisian women had been too long deprived." Thus elegance and pleasure had come back again; in the absence of the arts, elegance in dress sought to justify itself as the arts did in 1793, in which year the artists exhibiting in the revolutionary Salon proclaimed that it would be a mistake for austere republicans to "think it strange that we should busy ourselves with the arts when the European Coalition is besieging the land of freedom." The dressmakers of 1916 did likewise, declaring with proud conscientiousness as artists that "to seek new creations avoid the commonplace, prepare for victory, work out for the generations to come after the war a new formula of beauty—that was the ambition that drove them on, the chimera which they were pursuing, as one could convince oneself by coming to inspect their charmingly equipped showrooms on —— Street, where the watchword seems to be to obliterate the heavy sorrows of the present hour with a bright and cheerful note, but, of course, with the self-restraint required under the circumstances. The sorrows of the hour might, one must admit, break down the moral stamina of the ladies if we did not have so many noble examples of courage and endurance to contemplate. That is why, thinking of our soldier boys who, deep down in their trenches, are dreaming of more comfort and modish apparel for the dear absent one left at home, we shall not cease to put an ever increasing refinement into the creation of gowns answering to the needs of the moment. The vogue, as one can readily understand, runs

especially to the English houses—our allies—and this year the *tonneau* dress is all the rage, its charming, easy-going style giving us all a delightful individual touch of rare distinction. It will, indeed, be one of the most fortunate incidents of this sad war," added the charming chronicler (while awaiting the recovery of the lost provinces and the awakening of national sentiment), "it will, indeed, be one of the most fortunate consequences of this war to have achieved charming results in the matter of women's dress with very few materials and, without ill-considered and vulgar luxury, to have created pleasing fashions out of almost nothing. Instead of the gown duplicated for several customers by the large dressmaking establishment, there is a preference now for dresses made at home, as expressing the ideas, taste and unmistakable bent of the individual." As for philanthropic activity, the thought of all the suffering caused by the invasion and of so many war cripples very naturally forced it to become "still more resourceful," which made it necessary for the ladies in the high turbans to spend the latter part of the afternoon at bridge-teas, commenting on the news from the front, while their automobiles waited for them at the door, with a handsome soldier at the wheel, gossiping with the doorman. And it was not only the headgear, with its strange cylinder towering above the face, which was new. The faces were new also. The ladies in the new hats were young women come from here and there, who had been leaders of fashion, some for six months, some for two years and others for four. And these differences were as important to them as were three or four centuries of seniority between two families such as the Guermantes and the La Rochefoucaulds in the days when I first began going out into society. The lady who had known the Guermantes since 1914 regarded as a social upstart the one who was introduced to them in 1916, greeted her with the lofty air of a dowager, stared at her through her lorgnette and confided, with pursed lips, that it was not even known for a certainty whether that lady was married or not. "It is all rather sickening," concluded the

1914 lady, who would have liked the cycle of new admissions to end with herself. These newcomers, whom the young men considered very old and whom, moreover, certain old men who had been in other social circles besides the most fashionable believed they recognised as not being so new after all, did not merely furnish society with congenial entertainment in the way of political conversation and music amid exclusive surroundings; more than that, it was necessarily they who furnished it, for, in order that things may appear new, even if they are old—and even if they are new—in art, as in medicine or in society, new names are necessary (and they were new in certain respects). Thus Mme. Verdurin had gone to Venice during the war, but, like people who want to avoid talking about sorrow and sentiment, when she said it was "stunning," what she was admiring was not Venice or Saint Mark's or the palaces, all that I had liked so much and which she dismissed offhand, but the effect of the searchlights in the sky, about which she would give details backed up with figures. (Thus in each age a certain realism is born again as a reaction against the art admired up till then.) The Sainte-Euverte salon was a shopworn sign to which even the presence of the greatest artists and the most influential cabinet ministers would not have attracted anyone. On the other hand, to hear a remark uttered by the secretary of some artist or the assistant secretary of some cabinet minister, people flocked to the salons of the new turbanned ladies, whose fluttering invasion had filled Paris as with a swarm of chattering magpies. The ladies of the first Directoire had a queen who was young and beautiful, named Mme. Tallien. Those of the second had two, both old and homely, named Mme. Verdurin and Mme. Bontemps. Who would have held it against Mme. Bontemps that her husband had played in the Dreyfus case a part that had been sharply criticised by *L'Echo de Paris?* The entire Chamber of Deputies having at a certain moment turned revisionist, it was necessarily among former revisionists, as among former socialists, that one had had to look for recruits for the party of Law and

Order, Religious Tolerance and Military Preparedness. Formerly M. Bontemps would have been cordially hated, because at that time the anti-patriots were dubbed Dreyfusards. But soon this name was forgotten and replaced by that of "opponent of the three-year military service law." M. Bontemps was, on the contrary, one of the authors of that law, therefore he was a patriot. In society (and this social phenomenon, it should be remembered, is merely one application of a much more general psychological law) new ideas, whether reprehensible or not, cause alarm only until they have been assimilated and surrounded by reassuring elements. It was the same with Dreyfusism as with Saint-Loup's marriage to Odette's daughter, a marriage which had provoked an outcry at first. Now that everybody who was "anybody" was to be seen at the Saint-Loups', Gilberte might have had the morals of Odette herself and people would have gone there just the same and would have commended her if she had censured like a dowager new moral ideas not yet assimilated. Dreyfusism had now been given its place in a whole category of respectable and accustomed things. As for inquiring into its real merits, nobody dreamed of doing that now before approving it, any more than they formerly had before condemning it. It was no longer "shocking" and that was enough. People scarcely remembered that it had once been so, just as, after a certain time, people are not sure whether a young girl's father stole or not. When hard put to it, one can say, "No, it is the brother-in-law you're talking about, or someone else of the same name, but no one could ever say anything against that man." In like manner, there had certainly been different kinds of Dreyfusism, and a man who called on the Duchesse de Montmorency and who had brought about the passage of the three-year military service law could not be a bad fellow. And anyhow, we must "forgive and forget." And this willingness to forget was applied not only to Dreyfusism, but *a fortiori* to the Dreyfusards. Besides, there were now none but Dreyfusards in politics, since at one time

everybody who wanted to be in the government had been a Dreyfusard, even those who represented the very opposite of what Dreyfusism in its first shocking newness (at the time when Saint-Loup was shewing a dangerous inclination) had embodied—anti-patriotism, atheism, anarchism. So M. Bontemps' Dreyfusism, invisible and contemplative like that of all the politicians, was no more in evidence than the bones under one's skin. Nobody would have remembered that he had been a Dreyfusard, for society folk are absent-minded and forgetful, also because a very long time had passed since then—and they pretended to believe it was even longer, for it was one of the ideas most in vogue to maintain that the period before the war was separated from the war by something as profound and representing as long a duration of time as a geological epoch, and even that nationalist Brichot, referring to the Dreyfus case, used to say, "In those prehistoric times." To tell the truth, this deep change brought about by the war was in inverse ratio to the intelligence of the persons affected—at least, above a certain level, for at the very bottom of the scale the downright idiots and the outright pleasure-seekers paid no attention to the fact that there was a war. But at the top, those who have created for themselves an enveloping inner life, pay little heed to the importance of current events. What alters profoundly the course of their thinking is much more something which seems to be of no importance in itself and yet which reverses the order of time for them, making them live over again an earlier period of their life. The song of a bird in the park of Montboissier, a breeze laden with the scent of mignonette, are obviously incidents of less importance than the outstanding dates of the Revolution and the Empire. Yet they inspired Chateaubriand in his *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* to write pages of an infinitely greater value.

M. Bontemps would not hear of peace until Germany had been broken up into small states, as in the Middle Ages, the house of Hohenzollern having been dethroned and Wilhelm having received a dozen bullets in his hide. In short,

he was what Brichot called "a die-hard," which was the best certificate of good citizenship anyone could have given him. The first three days, it is true, Mme. Bontemps felt somewhat out of her element in the midst of the people who had asked Mme. Verdurin to introduce them to her, and it was in a slightly cutting tone that Mme. Verdurin replied, "The Count, my dear," when Mme. Bontemps asked, "That was the Duc d'Haussonville you just introduced to me, wasn't it?"—her mistake being due either to failure to connect the name of Haussonville with any title whatsoever, or, on the contrary, to too much knowledge and to an association of ideas with the *Parti des Ducs,* of which she had been told M. d'Haussonville was one of the members in the Academy. By the fourth day she began to be firmly established in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. There were still sometimes seen around her the unknown remnants of a little known social circle, but that caused no more surprise than the pieces of eggshell around a chick to those who knew the egg Mme. Bontemps had hatched from. But within a fortnight she had shaken them off and before the end of the first month, when she said, "I am going to call on the Lévis," everybody understood, without her having to be more explicit, that it was the Lévis-Mirepoix she meant; and there was not a duchess who would have gone to bed without finding out from Mme. Bontemps or Mme. Verdurin, at least by telephone, what the evening official bulletin contained and what it omitted, how the negotiations with Greece stood, what offensive was being prepared—in a word, everything the public would not learn until the next morning or later and of which they had thus, so to speak, a dressmakers' advance shewing. In her conversation, Mme. Verdurin, in reporting the news, would say "we" when speaking of France. "Very well, this is how it stands: we are demanding of the King of Greece that he withdraw from the Peloponnesus," etc.; "we are sending him," etc. And in all her accounts there kept recurring continually "G.H.Q." ("I telephoned to G.H.Q.") an abbreviation which she took the same pleas-

are in using as women who did not know the Prince d'Agrigente lately took in asking with a smile, when he was mentioned, so as to shew they were up-to-date, "Grigri?"—a pleasure which in tranquil times is enjoyed only by society folk, but which, in these great crises, even the common people enjoy. Our butler, for instance, if the King of Greece was mentioned, was able, thanks to the newspapers, to say, just like Wilhelm II, "Tino," whereas until then his familiarity with royalty had been less high-toned, having been invented by himself, as when he used to say, in speaking of the King of Spain, "Fonfonse." It should be noted also that, in proportion as the number of prominent society folk who made overtures to Mme. Verdurin increased, the number of those she called "bores" decreased. By a kind of magical transformation, every bore who came to call on her or who angled for an invitation suddenly became an agreeable, intelligent person. In short, at the end of a year the number of bores had been cut down to such a great extent that the "fear and intolerableness of being bored," which had occupied such a large place in Mme. Verdurin's conversation and had played such a big rôle in her life, had almost completely disappeared. You would have said that, late in life, this inability to stand being bored (which, by the way, she used in former times to declare she had not experienced in her early youth) caused her less suffering, like some forms of migraine or of nervous asthma, which lose their force as one gets older. And the terror of being bored would doubtless have left Mme. Verdurin entirely, for sheer lack of bores, if she had not to some extent filled the places of those who had ceased to bore her with fresh recruits drawn from the ranks of her former *fidèles*. Moreover (in order to have done with the duchesses who were now to be seen regularly at Mme. Verdurin's) they came there, without realising it, seeking precisely the same thing as the Dreyfusards used to, namely, fashionable entertainment arranged in such a way that the delicate enjoyment of it should satisfy their curiosity about politics and meet the need for discussing

among themselves the incidents they had read about in the newspapers. Mme. Verdurin would say, "Come at five o'clock and talk about the war," just as formerly "about the Case," or, in the intermediate period, "Come and listen to Morel." Now Morel should not have been there for the reason that he had not been in any way exempted from military service. He simply had not reported for duty and was a deserter, but no one knew this. Another salon luminary was "In the Soup," who had gotten himself exempted, notwithstanding his liking for athletics. He had become so identified in my mind as the author of an admirable work which I was constantly thinking about that it was only by chance, when I set up a connecting current between two sets of recollections, that it dawned on me it was he who was responsible for Albertine having left me. And even then, this cross-current led, in so far as these vestiges of remembrance of Albertine were concerned, to a road which came to an end in an abandoned field, so to speak, several years behind me. For I never thought of her any more. It was a road not lined with memories, a path I no longer followed. Whereas the works of Andrée's husband were recent and my mind was constantly following and dwelling on this line of recollection.

I ought also to say that it was neither very easy nor very pleasant to cultivate the acquaintance of "In the Soup" and that the friendly feeling one had for him was doomed to many disappointments. As a matter of fact, he was already at this time very ill and spared himself any fatigue that did not seem likely to give him pleasure. Now, he classed in the opposite category only opportunities to meet people he did not already know and whom his eager imagination doubtless represented to him as offering some chance of being different from others. But as for the people he was already acquainted with, he knew only too well what they were like and what they would be like; they no longer seemed worth the trouble of a fatigue that would be dangerous and perhaps fatal to him. He was, in short, a very

poor friend. And perhaps in his liking for new people there were to be found traces of the headlong audacity with which formerly at Balbec he plunged into athletics, gambling and all sorts of excess in eating and drinking. As for Mme. Verdurin, she wanted each time to introduce me to Andrée, not being able to admit that I had known her for a long time. Incidentally, Andrée seldom came with her husband, but she was a sincere and admirable friend to me. Loyal to her husband's æsthetic code, which was opposed to Russian ballets, she said of the Marquis de Polignac, "His house was decorated by Bakst. How can anybody sleep in it? I would prefer Dubufe."

Moreover, the Verdurins, by the inevitable development of æstheticism, which eventually devours its own tail, said they could not endure the modern style (besides, it came from Munich) nor apartments done in white, and now they liked only old French furniture in a dark-toned setting.

People were very much surprised at this time, when Mme. Verdurin could have anyone she wished at her house, to see her make overtures indirectly to someone she had completely lost sight of, Odette. They felt that she could not add anything to the fashionable social circle which the "little group" had grown to be. But a prolonged separation, besides allaying old grudges, occasionally revives an old friendship at the same time. And then, too, the phenomenon which causes the dying to utter none but old, familiar names, and old folk to take pleasure in memories of their childhood, this phenomenon has its equivalent in the social sphere. To succeed in her undertaking to get Odette to come back into her circle, she did not, of course, make use of her ultra-partisan supporters, but of the less devoted habitués, who had kept one foot in each salon. She would say to them, "I don't know why we never see her here any more. She may be sore over something, but I'm not. After all, what have I done to her? It was at my house she met both her husbands. If she wants to come back, she may be sure the door is open for her." These remarks, which would neces-

sarily have meant a heavy sacrifice for the pride of the "Mistress" of the house if they had not been prompted by her imagination, were duly reported, but without success. Mme. Verdurin awaited Odette in vain, until events which will be mentioned later brought about for entirely different reasons what the good offices of the two-faced emissaries, zealous though they were, had not been able to accomplish. So few are the easy victories, and the final defeats!

The circumstances were so much the same, while appearing to be different, that people quite naturally revived the old expressions, "right-thinking persons", "undesirable citizens." And, just as the old-time Communards had been anti-revisionists, so the leading Dreyfusards now wanted to have everybody shot, and they had the support of the generals, just as the latter, in the time of the Dreyfus case, had opposed Galliffet. To these gatherings Mme. Verdurin invited some ladies rather recently arrived, known in charitable circles, who the first few times came flashily gowned, with great necklaces of pearls, which Odette, who owned one as handsome that she had shewn off too much herself, looked at with stern disapproval, now that she was dressed in "war fashion," following the example of the ladies of the Faubourg. But women know how to adapt themselves. After three or four times, these ladies realised that the very gowns they had thought chic were taboo among really chic people; they laid aside their golden gowns and resigned themselves to simplicity.

Mme. Verdurin would say, "It is heartbreaking; I am going to telephone Bontemps to take the necessary steps tomorrow; they have again blue-pencilled the entire last part of Norpois' article, just because he hinted that Percin had been canned." For the stupid fad of the moment led each woman to take pride in using current expressions and she thought that in this way she shewed that she was up-to-date, like the middle-class woman who, when M. de Bréauté or M. de Charlus was mentioned, would say, "Who? Babel de Bréauté? Mémé de Charlus?" Duchesses, for that

matter, are no different, and they took a similar pleasure in saying "canned," for among duchesses, to people of common birth who have a bit of the poet in them, it is the name that differs, but they express themselves according to the intellectual category in which they belong and in which there are also a very large number of middle-class folk. Intellectual classifications have no regard for birth.

All these telephonings of Mme. Verdurin's, by the way, were not without their drawbacks. I have forgotten to mention it, but the Verdurin "salon," while continuing in spirit and in fact, had been temporarily transported to one of the largest Paris hotels, the lack of coal and light making more difficult the Verdurins' receptions in the former, very damp residence of the Venetian ambassadors. But the new salon was not without its pleasant features. Just as in Venice the space, restricted on account of the water, determines the form of the palaces, and just as a bit of garden in Paris is more charming than an estate out in the country, the narrow, diamond-shaped dining-room that Mme. Verdurin had at the hotel turned its expanse of dazzlingly white wall into a sort of screen, on which were projected every Wednesday, and almost every day, all the most interesting and the most varied types of people and the most fashionably dressed women in Paris, all of them delighted to take advantage of the lavish expenditure of the Verdurins, which, thanks to their wealth, kept on increasing at a time when the richest people were cutting down expenses on account of inability to collect their incomes. The turn given to these receptions was somewhat altered, but without lessening their charm for Brichot, who, as the social connexions of the Verdurins extended more and more widely, found in their salon unexpected pleasures concentrated in a small space, like surprises in a Christmas stocking. And then, some days there were so many guests for dinner that the dining-room in the private apartment was too small and dinner was served in the huge dining-room downstairs, where the "faithful," while pretending hypocritically to be sorry to miss the

cosiness upstairs, were at bottom delighted—making a group by themselves, as they used to do in the little railway train —to be stared at and envied by those at the adjoining tables. Of course, in normal peace times a society item sent in a roundabout manner to *Le Figaro* or *Le Gaulois* would have conveyed to more people than could be accommodated in the dining-room of the Majestic the news that Brichot had dined with the Duchesse de Duras. But society editors having done away with this type of news since the beginning of the war (they made it up on burials, official honours conferred and Franco-American banquets) publicity could now be obtained only in this infantile and restricted manner, worthy of the earliest ages, before Gutenberg's invention— namely, by being seen at Mme. Verdurin's table. After dinner, they went upstairs to the "Mistress's" drawing-rooms and then the telephonings would begin. But many big hotels at that time were infested with spies, who made note of the news that Bontemps gave over the telephone with a lack of discretion which, by sheer good luck, was offset by the unreliability of his information, which was always contradicted by subsequent developments.

At dusk, before the hour when the afternoon teas ended, while the sky was still light, one saw little brown spots in the distance which might have been mistaken, against the blue evening sky, for gnats or birds. In the same way, when one sees a mountain very far away, one might think it a cloud. But one is impressed, knowing that this cloud is immense, solid, unyielding. Just so was I deeply moved because the brown spot in the summer sky was neither a gnat nor a bird, but an airplane piloted by men who were watching over Paris. The recollection of the airplanes I had seen near Versailles the last time I went out with Albertine had no part in this emotion because the memory of that occasion had become a matter of indifference to me.

At the dinner hour the restaurants were crowded and if, passing by, I saw a poor soldier on leave, who had escaped for six days from the constant danger of death and was

about to go back to the trenches again, fix his gaze for an instant on the brightly lighted windows, I suffered as I used to at the hotel at Balbec when the fishermen watched us dining, but now I suffered more because I knew that the misery of the soldier is greater than that of the poor man, being a merging of all miseries and still more touching because more resigned, more noble, and because, with a philosophical shake of the head, without hatred, about to return to the front, he said, as he saw the slackers jostle one another as they reserved their tables, "You would never think there was a war going on here." Then at half-past nine, before anyone had had time to finish dinner, all the lights were suddenly put out on account of the police regulations, and the new jostling of the slackers, snatching their overcoats from the doormen of the restaurant where I had dined with Saint-Loup one evening when he was on leave, took place at nine thirty-five in a mysterious half-light like that of a room where a magic lantern is being shewn or of a playhouse used for projecting the films of one of those very cinemas to which these men and women diners were going to rush. But after that hour, for those who, like me on the evening I am speaking of, had stayed at home for dinner and were going out to call on friends, Paris was, at least, in certain quarters, darker than the Combray of my childhood; when we went to see one another, it was like calling on country neighbours. Ah, if Albertine had been alive, how lovely it would have been, the evenings when I dined out, to arrange to meet her outdoors under the arcades. At first I would have seen nothing and would have thought, with a shock, that she had failed to come to the meeting-place, when all of a sudden I would have espied one of her dear gray dresses beginning to stand out against the black wall and her eyes smiling at sight of me, and we would have been able to stroll along with our arms around one another, without anyone recognising us or disturbing us, and then go home together. Alas, I was alone and it seemed to me as if I were going to call on a neighbour in the country, one

of those visits such as Swann used to pay us after dinner, without meeting more passers-by in the darkness of Tansonville on that little towpath as far as the Rue du Saint-Esprit than I was meeting now on the streets resembling winding country roads from the Rue Clotilde to the Rue Bonaparte. Moreover, as those bits of landscape which change with the weather were no longer marred by a now incongruous frame, on evenings when icy gusts were driven by the wind, I felt more as if I were on the shore of that raging sea I used to dream about so frequently than I ever felt at Balbec; and even other nature effects which had not existed until then in Paris gave one the impression of having just gotten off the train to spend a vacation away off in the country: for example, the contrast of light and shadow on the ground at one's side on moonlit evenings. Moonlight produced effects unknown in cities even in the dead of winter; on the Boulevard Haussmann its beams spread out over the snow, which no workers now swept away, just as over a glacier in the Alps. On this snow of bluish gold the silhouettes of the trees were reflected sharp and clear with the delicacy they have in certain Japanese paintings or in some of Raphael's backgrounds; they stretched out along the ground right at the foot of the trees as one often sees them in nature when the setting sun floods with a mirror-like sheen the fields dotted with trees at regular intervals. But, by an exquisitely delicate refinement, the field over which these trees cast their shadows, light as human souls, was a heaven-like field, not green but so dazzlingly white with moonlight falling on jade-green snow that one would have thought it a fabric woven of pure petals of blossoming pear trees. And in the squares the deities who presided over the public fountains, clasping a jet of ice, looked like statues of a twofold substance which the artist had wished to create by combining exclusively bronze and crystal. On these unusual days, all the houses were darkened; but sometimes in the spring, on the contrary, here and there, braving the police regulations, a private residence, or merely one floor, or even just one

room of one floor, the shutters not having been closed, stood out as if resting all by itself on impalpable darkness, like a purely luminous projection, a phantom without substance. And looking away up, one could make out in the dim, golden-yellow light, a woman who in this engulfing darkness in which she seemed like an anchorite, took on the veiled, mysterious charm of a vision of the Orient. Then one passed on and nothing more interrupted the hygienic and monotonous rhythmic footfalls in the night.

It occurred to me that it was a long time since I had seen any of the persons mentioned in these volumes. During the two months I spent in Paris in 1914, I had had a glimpse of M. de Charlus and I had seen Bloch and Saint-Loup, the latter only twice. The second time was certainly the one when he had been the most like himself; it had effaced all the none too pleasant impressions of insincerity he had made on me during the stay at Tansonville which I have just related, and I had recognised in him all his former fine qualities. The first time I saw him after the declaration of war, namely, at the beginning of the next week, while Bloch displayed the most rabidly patriotic sentiments, Saint-Loup could not speak of himself sarcastically enough for not reënlisting and I was almost shocked at the violence of his tone. He was just back from Balbec. "No," he exclaimed with force and humour, "any man who doesn't go to war, whatever excuse he may give, just doesn't want to get killed; he's afraid." And with the same emphatic gesture, but even more vigorous, with which he had scored other men's fear, he added, "And I, too, if I am not reënlisting, it is simply through fear, that's all." I had already noticed in different people that affecting laudable sentiments is not the only way of concealing reprehensible ones, but a newer way is to make a show of the latter in order at least not to appear to shut one's eyes to them. Moreover, in Saint-Loup this tendency was reinforced by his habit, whenever he had done something indiscreet or ill-advised for which

he might be censured, of announcing what he had done and saying he had done it on purpose. He must have caught this habit, I really believe, from some professor at the War College with whom he had lived on intimate terms and for whom he expressed great admiration. I had, therefore, no hesitation in interpreting this outbreak as the verbal ratification of a sentiment Saint-Loup preferred to announce, since it had determined his conduct and his abstention from taking part in the war that was starting. "Have you heard anyone say that my Aunt Oriane was going to get a divorce?" he inquired as he left me. "I know absolutely nothing about it personally. People say so every now and then and I have heard it announced so often that I shall wait until it has happened before believing it. I might remark that it would be very easy to understand; my uncle is a charming man, not only in society, but also toward his friends and relatives. He is even, in one way, much more kind-hearted than my aunt, who is a saint but makes him terribly conscious of the fact. Only he is a dreadful husband, who has never stopped being untrue to his wife, insulting her, treating her brutally and making her go without money. It would be so natural for her to leave him that that is one reason why the report may be true, but it is also a reason why it may not be true because it would be natural for people to imagine it and then announce it. And then, seeing that she has endured him this long . . . But I know very well that many things are announced in error and denied and later on come true." That gave me the idea of asking him whether, before his marriage to Gilberte, there had been any question of his marrying Mlle. de Guermantes. He was startled and assured me there had not, that it was only one of those society rumours that spring up now and then for no good reason and disappear in the same way and the falseness of which does not make those who believed them more wary about putting faith in and circulating the very next rumour that comes up about an engagement, a divorce or something in politics. Forty-eight hours had not

passed before certain facts which I ascertained proved to me that I had been absolutely wrong in my interpretation of Robert's remark, "The trouble with all the men who are not at the front is that they are afraid." Saint-Loup had said that in order to take a witty part in the conversation and get off something original in the line of psychology until he was sure his reënlistment would be accepted. But meanwhile he was moving heaven and earth to bring that about—in which he was less original than he believed (in the sense he thought that word should have) but more profoundly French, of the style of Saint-André-des-Champs, more in agreement with all the best there was in the Frenchmen of Saint-André-des-Champs, nobles, burghers and serfs, deferential toward their overlords or in revolt against them, two equally French divisions of the same family, the Françoise branch and the Sauton branch, from which two arrows again pointed in the same direction, namely, toward the frontier. Bloch had been delighted to hear a nationalist (who, incidentally, was not much of a nationalist) make a confession of cowardice and, when Saint-Loup asked him if he was to leave for the front, he assumed the air of a high priest as he replied, "Nearsighted." But when Bloch came to see me panic-stricken a few days later, he had completely changed his opinion about the war. Although "nearsighted," he had been passed as fit for military service. I was walking home with him when we met Saint-Loup, who had an appointment at the War Department to be introduced to a colonel by an ex-army officer. "M. de Cambremer," he explained to me. "Why, that's so! It's an old acquaintance of yours I am telling you about. You know Cancan as well as I do." I replied that I did, indeed, know him and his wife, also, and did not think very highly of them. But I was so accustomed, since the first time I saw them, to regarding the wife, nevertheless, as an unusual person, thoroughly familiar with Schopenhauer and having access, in short, to an intellectual world that was closed to her uncouth husband, that I was at first astonished to hear Saint-Loup reply, "His

wife is an idiot, you can have her. But he is a fine fellow who had ability and is still very good company." By the "idiocy" of the wife, Saint-Loup doubtless meant her mad desire to get into the best society, something which the best society condemns most severely. And the good qualities he found in the husband were doubtless more or less those his niece recognised in him when she declared him the most promising member of the family. He at any rate did not bother himself about duchesses, but, to tell the truth, that is a kind of intelligence which is as different from the intelligence of thinking people as is the "intelligence" which the public attributes to this or that rich man for having succeeded in making a fortune. But Saint-Loup's remarks did not displease me in so far as they were a reminder that pretentiousness is next door to stupidity and that simplicity has a flavour, somewhat hidden but pleasant. It is true, I had not had an opportunity to sample M. de Cambremer's simplicity. But that is just how it comes about that one person is so many different persons, according to the people who have an opinion of him, even independently of the different conclusions they may reach. In Cambremer's case, I had known only the outer shell. And the inner flavour of the man, to which others testified, was unknown to me. Bloch left us in front of his door, welling over with bitterness against Saint-Loup and declaring that "you shoulder-strapped fashion plates," strutting around staff headquarters, ran no risks, and that he, a common private of the second class, had no desire to get himself "shot full of holes" for Wilhelm. "It seems he is seriously ill, Emperor William," replied Saint-Loup. Bloch, who, like all people in close touch with the Stock Exchange, was peculiarly quick at picking up sensational news, added, "It is even said in many quarters that he is dead." On the Stock Exchange every sovereign who is ill, whether Edward VII or William II, is dead, every town that is about to be besieged has been captured. "They are suppressing the news," added Bloch, "only so as not to affect public opinion among the Boches.

But he died last night. My father got it from a most reliable source." Reliable sources were the only ones to which M. Bloch senior paid any heed when, through the good fortune he enjoyed of being in communication with them, thanks to his "high connexions," he received from them the secret tip that *Extérieure* bonds were going up or De Beers stocks were going to weaken. Moreover, if at that very moment there came a rise in De Beers or offerings of *Extérieure* bonds, if the market for the former was strong and active and for the latter uncertain and weak and people were holding back, the reliable source was still no less a reliable source. And so Bloch announced to us the Kaiser's death with a mysterious and important, but also exasperated air. He was above all particularly irritated to hear Robert say "Emperor William." I believe that even under the knife of the guillotine Saint-Loup and M. de Guermantes would have been unable to use any other expression. Two well bred men who were the only human beings left on a desert island, where they did not have to display good manners toward anyone, would recognise one another by these signs of breeding, just as two Latinists would quote Virgil correctly. Saint-Loup, even if he had been put to the torture by the Germans, would never have been able to say anything else but "Emperor William." And yet this *savoir vivre* is nevertheless an indication of serious mental restrictions. He who cannot throw them off remains merely a well bred man. That elegant mediocrity, it must be admitted, is delightful—especially with all the hidden generosity and unexpressed heroism that accompany it—as compared with the vulgarity of Bloch, who, at the same time a braggart and a miserable coward, exclaimed to Saint-Loup, "You couldn't say plain 'William' of course. There you are, you're scared and you're already crawling on your belly before him. Ah, these fellows will make fine soldiers at the front; they will lick the boots of the Boches. You're a lot of second lieutenants who know how to shew off in a circus parade, but that's all!" "Poor Bloch is insistent that I

shall do nothing but strut about," said Saint-Loup with a smile when we had left our companion. And I sensed clearly that strutting about was not at all what Robert wanted, although I did not realise what his intentions were as clearly as I did later, when, the cavalry remaining inactive, he got permission to serve as an infantry officer and then with the *chasseurs à pied,* and finally when there came the sequel that will be told later. But Bloch had no conception of Robert's patriotism, simply because Robert did not talk about it at all. While Bloch expressed to us some viciously anti-militarist convictions, once he had been declared fit for service, he had previously made the most blindly patriotic declarations when he thought himself rejected on account of nearsightedness. But Saint-Loup would have been unable to make these declarations, in the first place through a sort of delicacy of feeling which prevents one from expressing sentiments that are too deep and that one considers quite natural. My mother, in the old days, not only would not have hesitated a second to die for my grandmother, but she would have suffered terribly if anyone had prevented her from doing so. Nevertheless, as I look back, it is impossible for me to imagine as coming from her lips a remark such as, "I would give my life for my mother." Robert was just as reticent about his love for France, and he seemed to me at this moment much more of a Saint-Loup (as far as I could picture his father to myself) than a Guermantes. He would have been restrained from giving expression to those sentiments also by the, in a certain sense, moral quality of his intelligence. Intelligent and really earnest workers feel a certain aversion for those who put what they do into literature and exploit it. We had not been together at either the *lycée* or the Sorbonne, but we had individually taken certain courses under the same teachers and I remember Saint-Loup's smile as he spoke of those who, while, it is true, giving remarkable courses, tried to make themselves out to be geniuses by attaching ambitious names to their theories. If we even barely mentioned them,

Robert would laugh heartily. Our predilection naturally did not run instinctively to the Cottards and the Brichots but, after all, we did feel a certain respect for men who had a thorough knowledge of Greek or medicine but did not think themselves thereby justified in making charlatans of themselves. Just as all my mother's actions used to be based on the sentiment that she would give her life for her mother, as she had never formulated this sentiment to herself, she would under any circumstances have considered it not only useless and ridiculous, but shocking and mortifying to express it to others; in the same way it was impossible for me to imagine Saint-Loup (as he spoke to me of his equipment, of the errands he had to do, of our chance of victory, of how little the Russian army was worth and what England would do) uttering a single one of the most eloquent sentences that the most engaging cabinet minister can declaim before the deputies, bringing them to their feet with enthusiasm. However, I cannot affirm that, in this negative side of his character, which prevented him from giving expression to his finer feelings, there was not an effect of the "Guermantes spirit," of which we saw so many manifestations in Swann. For, if I found him predominantly Saint-Loup, there was also some Guermantes in his make-up and on that side, among the many incentives that aroused his courage, there were some that one did not find among his Doncières friends, those young men in love with their profession, with whom I had dined every evening and so many of whom had met death at the Battle of the Marne or elsewhere at the head of their men. The young socialists who may have been at Doncières when I was there, but whom I did not meet because they were not in Saint-Loup's set, had a good demonstration that the officers of this group were by no means "*aristos*," with the implication of haughty pride and base self-indulgence which the "common herd," the officers who had risen from the ranks, the Freemasons, gave to that nickname. And in similar manner, moreover, the officers of aristocratic birth found this same patriotism

in full swing among the socialists, whom, when I was at Doncières and the Dreyfus affair was at its height, I had heard them accuse of being men without a country. The patriotism of the military men, quite as sincere and deep, had assumed a well defined form which they believed inviolable and which it made them indignant to see "insulted," whereas more or less unconscious patriots like the Radical-Socialists, independent and without any well defined patriotic religion, had never been able to understand what a profound reality existed in what they took to be empty, vindictive formulas. It is true that, like them, Saint-Loup also had become accustomed to developing within him, as the most real part of himself, the search for and the working out of the best maneuvers, with a view to the greatest strategic and tactical successes, so that for him as for them the life of the body was something relatively unimportant which could easily be sacrificed to that inner part, the true vital nucleus around which their personal existence had no value except as a protective covering. I told Saint-Loup about his friend, the manager of the Grand Hotel at Balbec, who, it seems, had maintained that there had been defections (or, as he called them, "defectuosities") in certain French regiments at the beginning of the war, and had accused what he called "the Prussian militarist" of having provoked this, adding with a laugh, apropos of his brother, "He is in the trenches; the boys are within thirty yards of the Boches!" Until one day it was discovered that he was a Boche himself and he was put in an internment camp. "Speaking of Balbec, do you remember the former elevator boy at the hotel?" Saint-Loup inquired as he was leaving me, in the tone of someone who did not seem to know exactly who it was and counted on me to enlighten him. "He is enlisting and he has written to ask me to get him into the aviation corps." Doubtless the elevator boy was tired of going up in the captive cage of the elevator and the lofty altitudes of the staircase of the Grand Hotel no longer satisfied his ambition. He was going to "win his stripes"

otherwise than as a hotel porter, for our destiny is not always what we had expected. "I shall certainly endorse his application," said Saint-Loup. "I was just telling Gilberte this morning, we shall never have enough airplanes. That's what we need in order to see what the enemy is preparing and to destroy the chief advantage of an attack, namely, the surprise; the best army will perhaps be the one that has the best eyes. And how about poor Françoise, has she succeeded in getting her nephew exempted?" Françoise had been for a long time making every possible effort to obtain exemption for her nephew, but when she was offered a letter of recommendation to General de Saint-Joseph from the Guermantes, she had replied in a hopeless tone, "Oh, no, that would be no use; you can't get anywhere with that silly old man; he's the worst there is, he's patriotic." But as soon as it was a question of war, notwithstanding her sorrow, she maintained that the "poor Russians" must not be abandoned, since the two countries were "allianced." The butler, who, by the way, was convinced that the war would last only ten days and would end with a brilliant victory for France, would not, for fear the outcome might prove him a poor prophet, have had the courage, and would not even have had enough imagination, to predict a long and indecisive war. But in anticipation of this complete and early victory he tried to invent everything he could to make Françoise miserable. "It is quite possible that things may go very badly for a while, because it appears that many of the men refuse to obey orders, lads of sixteen who break down and cry." (In order to "make her mad" he tried to tell her unpleasant things; he called this "giving her a dig, tossing her an apostrophe, throwing her a pun.") "Lads of sixteen, Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Françoise, and then, skeptical for a moment, "But they said they were not taking them under twenty; why, they're only children!" "Of course, the newspapers have been told not to say anything about this. And what's more, all the young men will be put in the front ranks; there won't be many of

them will come back. In one way, that won't be so bad; a good blood-letting, you know, is a benefit now and then; it will help business. And by Jove, if there are some tender-hearted lads who hesitate a bit, they will shoot them at once, a dozen bullets in their hide, bang! In one way, they have to do it. And besides, what do the officers care? They get their dough and that's all they're after." Françoise would turn so pale during each of these conversations that we were afraid the butler would kill her with a heart attack. But for all that, she did not mend her ways. When a young girl would come to see me, however much the old servant's legs might pain her, if I happened to leave my room for an instant, I would see her in the clothes closet at the top of a ladder—looking for some overcoat of mine, she would explain, to see if the moths were getting at it, but in reality eavesdropping. In spite of all my reprimands, she continued her habit of asking questions in a round-about, insidious manner, for which she had some time before adopted the formula, "because, of course." Not daring to ask me, for example, "Has that lady a home of her own?" she would look up timidly like a faithful dog and say, "Because, of course, that lady has a private residence . . ." avoiding the outright interrogation not so much from politeness as in order not to appear inquisitive. Finally, since the servants we are most attached to—especially if they no longer give us the attention or consideration their positions call for—remain, unfortunately, servants and, the more they believe they are getting into our social class, the more clearly they shew the limits of their own (which we would like to abolish) so Françoise would often permit herself peculiar remarks about me which a well bred person would not have made (just to annoy me, the butler would have said). For example, with a joy as well concealed but as profound as if it had been a case of serious illness, if I was warm and had beads of perspiration on my brow (to which I paid no attention), she would say to me, "Why you're dripping wet!" as surprised as if she were witnessing some strange

phenomenon, smiling a little with the disdain one feels for something improper ("You're going out and you've forgotten to put on a necktie!") but assuming an anxious tone of voice well calculated to make one uneasy about the state of his health. You would have thought I was the only person in the world who had ever been in such a perspiration. For in her humbleness, in her tender admiration for people who were far inferior to her, she adopted their common ways of talking. Her daughter having complained to me about her and having told me—where she got it, I have no idea—"She is always finding fault, says I don't shut the doors tight, *et patati patali et patata patala,*" Françoise no doubt thought it was only her limited education which had till then deprived her of that fine expression. And from her lips on which had thitherto flowered only the purest French, I now heard several times a day, "*et patati patali et patata patala.*" It is curious, by the way, how little any one person's language, and even his thoughts, will vary. The butler, having formed the habit of saying that M. Poincaré's motives were not honourable, not for financial reasons, but because he had insisted there must be war, repeated this seven or eight times a day before the same regular audience and always with the same success. Not a word was changed, not a gesture, not an intonation. Although it lasted only two minutes, it was as invariable as a theatrical performance. His mistakes in French corrupted her speech quite as much as did her daughter's.

She no longer slept or ate; although she did not understand the news bulletins at all, she had them read to her by the butler, who understood them but little better and whose desire to torment her was often overcome by patriotic elation; he would say, with an engaging laugh, speaking of the Germans, "It must be warming up out there; good old Joffre is going to put over a fast one on them." Françoise did not understand any too well what it all meant, but she nevertheless felt that this remark was part of the well intentioned, eccentric nonsense that, as a matter of courtesy, a well bred

person must respond to good-humouredly; and so, laughingly shrugging her shoulders as if to say, "He's always the same old fellow," she would relieve her tears with a smile. At any rate, she was glad that her new butcher boy, who, notwithstanding his trade, was rather timid (and yet he had started in a slaughter-house) was not old enough to be drafted. But for that, she might easily have been capable of going to see the Minister of War.

The butler could not have conceived that the bulletins were not encouraging and that the Allies were not advancing on Berlin, since he read, "We have repulsed, with heavy loss to the enemy," and so on, and he celebrated these engagements as fresh victories. However, I was alarmed at the rate at which the scene of these "victories" was drawing nearer and nearer to Paris, and I was even surprised that the butler, having seen in one bulletin that an engagement had taken place near Lens, was not disturbed on reading in the newspaper the following day that it had ended in our favour at Jouy-le-Vicomte, the outskirts of which we were holding firmly. Now the butler knew, or at least was familiar with the name of, Jouy-le-Vicomte, which was not so very far from Combray. But newspaper readers, like lovers, are blindfolded. They do not try to grasp the facts. They believe the editor's honeyed words as a lover believes his mistress. They are beaten and yet pleased because they do not believe themselves beaten but victorious. I should mention that I had not stayed long in Paris but had returned rather quickly to my sanitarium. Although as a rule the doctor kept us cut off from the world, they had delivered to me at different times one letter from Gilberte and one from Robert. Gilberte wrote (this was about September, 1914) that, however much she had wanted to stay in Paris in order to get news of Robert more easily, the constant raids over Paris by Taube planes had caused her so much alarm, especially for her little girl, that she had fled from Paris by the last train leaving for Combray, that the train had not even gotten as far as Combray and that it was only thanks to a

farmer's cart, in which she had made a frightful ten hours' journey, that she had succeeded in reaching Tansonville. "And guess what was awaiting your old friend there," she wrote as she ended her letter. "I had left Paris to get away from the German airplanes, imagining that I should be sheltered from everything at Tansonville. I had not been there two days when you will never guess who arrived—the Germans, who were invading the region after having beaten our troops near La Fère. A German regimental staff, followed by a regiment, presented itself at the gates of Tansonville and I had to give the officers shelter—no way to escape, no more trains, nothing." Had the German staff officers behaved themselves well, or should I see in Gilberte's letter an effect, through contagion, of the spirit of the Guermantes, who were of Bavarian origin, related to the highest aristocracy of Germany? However that may be, Gilberte never tired of commenting on the perfect manners of the officers and even of the soldiers, who had merely requested "permission to pick one of the forget-me-nots growing beside the pond," and she contrasted these good manners with the uncontrolled vandalism of the French fugitives, who had overrun the estate and looted everything before the German generals got there. Anyhow, if Gilberte's letter in certain ways was infused with the Guermantes spirit—with Jewish internationalism, others might say, but this would probably be unfair, as will be seen later—the letter I received from Robert a good many months later was much more Saint-Loup than Guermantes and reflected, in addition, all the liberal culture he had acquired—in short, a most engaging and delightful letter. Unfortunately, he did not discuss strategy, as in our talks at Doncières, nor tell me to what extent he considered that the war confirmed or invalidated the principles he had outlined to me at that time. The most he did say was that, in reality, several wars had followed one another since 1914, the lessons learned from each having modified the manner of conducting the next one. For example, to the theory of "breaking through" had been added

the proposition that the terrain occupied by the enemy must first be entirely torn up by artillery fire. But then they had come to realise that this artillery fire, on the other hand, made it impossible for the infantry and artillery to advance over a terrain where thousands of shell holes had created just so many additional obstacles. "War," he wrote, "does not escape the operation of the laws laid down by our old friend Hegel; it is in a state of constant evolution." This was scant information, as compared with what I would have liked to know. However, what annoyed me still more was that he was not allowed to mention generals' names. But anyhow, to judge by the little I could gather from the newspapers, the men who were conducting this war were not those about whom I had been so interested at Doncières to know which would shew the most ability in actual warfare. Geslin de Bourgogne, Galliffet, Négrier were dead. Pau had retired from active service shortly before the outbreak of the war. Joffre, Foch, Castelnau, Pétain, we had never discussed. "My dear fellow," Robert wrote, "if you saw all these men, especially those who come from the common people, workingmen and shopkeepers, who had no idea how much heroism was hidden away inside them and would have died peacefully in their beds without ever having suspected it—if you saw them run through a hail of bullets to rescue a comrade or bring in a wounded officer or, when struck themselves, die with a smile on their lips because the head surgeon informs them that the trench was retaken from the Germans, I assure you, old fellow, that gives one a fine conception of what a Frenchman is and makes one understand those historic periods which used to seem rather odd when we studied about them in school. The epic is so fine that you would find, as I have done, that words are no longer adequate. Contact with this spiritual grandeur has given the word *poilu* such a meaning for me that I no longer realise that it originally contained an allusion or a jest, any more than we think of this when we see the word *chouans,* for example. *Poilu,* I feel, like the words 'deluge' or 'Christ', is even now ready

for great poets, as were the barbarians in all their grandeur, before ever Hugo, De Vigny or the others made use of them. I said the common people are the best, but everyone is fine. Poor Vaugoubert, the ambassador's son, was wounded seven times before he was finally killed, and each time he came back from an expedition without having been hit, he seemed to apologise and want to explain that it wasn't his fault. He was a delightful fellow. We had become very much attached to one another. His poor parents got permission to come to the burial on condition that they would not wear mourning and would stay only five minutes because of the bombardment. His mother, a big, rawboned woman whom you perhaps know, may have been heartbroken, but no one would have guessed it. The poor father, however, was in such a state that I assure you even I, who have become quite devoid of feeling as a result of getting used to seeing the head of the comrade who is talking to me suddenly torn open by a shell or cut clean off from the body, I could not control myself as I witnessed the state of complete collapse of poor Vaugoubert, who was reduced to a mere rag. It was no use for the general to tell him that it was for the sake of France and that his son had borne himself like a hero; all that only redoubled the poor man's sobs and he could not tear himself away from his son's body. Well, anyhow—and that's why we must repeat to one another that 'they shall not pass'—all those men, like my poor *valet de chambre* and Vaugoubert, really have prevented the Germans from passing. Maybe you think we are not advancing much, but we must not analyse; an army feels itself victorious by a sort of instinctive impression, the way a dying man feels he is done for. Now, we know we will win and we are determined to, in order to dictate a just peace, just not only to ourselves, but also to the Germans." Whereas heroes of mediocre and commonplace intelligence, writing poems during their convalescence, tried to put their descriptions of the war, not on a level with the incidents, which are nothing in themselves, but on a plane of banal æsthetics, following the old, familiar

rules and writing as they would have done ten years before of "the bloody dawn", "the quivering flight of victory", etc., Saint-Loup, on the other hand, much more intelligent and much more of an artist, retained his intelligence and his artistic sense and, while stationed at the edge of a swampy forest, used to jot down for me with excellent taste descriptions of the landscape, just as though he were there merely to hunt ducks. To give me an idea of certain contrasts of light and shadow which had "cast a spell of enchantment over his morning," he mentioned various pictures we both loved, and did not hesitate to refer to a page by Romain Rolland, or even Nietzsche, with the independence of men at the front, who were not afraid, as were the people at home, to utter a German name, and there was even a slight touch of bravado in his quoting from one of the enemy, as when Colonel Du Paty de Clam, in the witnesses' room at the Zola trial, passing in front of Pierre Quillard, a very violently Dreyfusard poet (whom, by the way, he did not know) recited some lines from the latter's symbolistic drama, *La Fille aux Mains Coupées*. If Saint-Loup mentioned in his letters an air of Schumann's, he always gave the title in German, and he did not beat about the bush to tell me how, at dawn one morning, when he heard the first twittering of the birds at the edge of a forest, he had been thrilled as if he had been listening to the bird in "the sublime *Siegfried*," which, indeed, he hoped to hear again after the war. And now, on my second return to Paris, the very day after my arrival, I had received another letter from Gilberte, who had doubtless forgotten the letter I have mentioned, or its contents, for in this second letter her departure from Paris in 1914 was presented retrospectively in quite a different light. "Perhaps you do not know, my dear friend," she wrote, "that I have been at Tansonville for nearly two years now. I arrived at the same time as the Germans. Everybody tried to keep me from leaving Paris. They said I was crazy. 'Why!' they said, 'you are safe here in Paris and yet you want to go into the invaded territory just when everybody else is trying to

get away from there!' I did not deny the soundness of this argument, but what could I do? I have just one good quality, I am not a coward—or, if you prefer it that way, I am loyal and, when I heard that my dear Tansonville was in danger, I did not want to leave our old superintendent alone to defend it. I felt that my place was by his side. And, incidentally, thanks to this decision I was able pretty largely to save the château (whereas the others in that region, abandoned by their panic-stricken owners, have been nearly all destroyed from cellar to garret) and not only the château, but also the priceless collections that my dear father thought so much of." In short, Gilberte was now convinced that she had gone to Tansonville not, as she wrote me in 1914, to be in a safe place and get away from the Germans, but to face them and protect her château from them. They had not remained in Tansonville, she added, but from then on there had been a continual coming and going of military men at the château far in excess of that which drew tears from Françoise in the street at Combray, and, as she said quite truthfully this time, she had been leading ever since then the real life of those at the front. In consequence, her admirable conduct was mentioned with high praise in the newspapers and there was talk of giving her a decoration. The end of her letter was perfectly true. "You have no idea, my dear friend, what war is like, nor of the importance which a road, a bridge or a hill can assume. How often have I thought of you and of the walks you made so delightful when we used to go together over all this region now laid waste and where today tremendous battles are fought for possession of this or that road or hillside that you used to love and where we so often went together. Probably, like me, you never imagined that obscure Roussainville or deadly dull Méséglise, from which they used to bring us our letters and where they went to get a doctor when you were taken ill, would ever be famous places. Well, my dear friend, they have entered into eternal glory, side by side with Austerlitz or Valmy. The Battle of Méséglise lasted more than eight months; the Ger-

mans lost over a hundred thousand men there; they destroyed the town, but they never succeeded in capturing it. The little road you were so fond of, which we used to call 'Hawthorn Lane' and where you claim that, as a child, you fell in love with me (whereas, I assure you, the truth is that I fell in love with you instead) I can't tell you what importance it has acquired. The huge wheat field where it ends, well, that's the famous *cote 307,* the name of which you must have noticed recurring so often in the official bulletins. The French blew up the little bridge over the Vivonne which you used to say did not recall your childhood to you as much as you would have liked; the Germans threw other bridges across and during a year and a half they held one half of Combray and the French held the other." The day after I received this letter, that is to say, two days before that evening when I heard the echo of my own footsteps as I walked along in the dark, ruminating on all these recollections, Saint-Loup, back from the front and just about to return there, paid me a visit of only a few moments' duration, the mere announcement of which had caused me great emotion. Françoise's first impulse was to rush up to him in the hope that he would be able to get exemption for the timid butcher boy, who in a year's time would be old enough to be drafted. But she checked herself as she realised the futility of such a step, for the timid killer of animals had changed employers some time before and, either through fear of losing our patronage or in all good faith, our butcher woman had assured Françoise that she did not know where the lad, "who was not a good butcher anyhow," was now employed. Françoise had searched thoroughly in all directions, but Paris is large and the butcher shops are numerous, and she had gone into many of them to no avail, she had never been able to get trace of the timid, blood-bespattered young man.

When Saint-Loup entered my bedroom, I approached him with that feeling of timidity, that impression of the supernatural which, at bottom, all the men on leave gave us and which one feels on coming into the presence of someone

stricken with a fatal disease but who nevertheless still gets up, dresses and walks about. It seemed (especially at the beginning, for those who had not been living away from Paris, as I had been, had undergone the deadening effect of habit, which cuts away from things we have seen many times the taproot of deep impression and thought which gives them their real significance) it seemed almost as if there were something cruel in these leaves of absence granted to the men at the front. The first few times, one said to oneself, "They will not be willing to go back; they will desert." And, indeed, it was not merely that they came from places which seemed to us unreal, because we had only read about them in the newspapers and could not imagine it possible that anyone could take part in such titanic combats and come out with only a bruised shoulder; they were to return to the shores of death, from whence they had come to be among us for a brief moment, strange beyond our comprehension, inspiring in us tenderness, awe and a sense of mystery, as do the dead whom we evoke, who appear before us for a second, whom we dare not question and who, moreover, at best would be able only to reply, "You could never imagine what it is like." For, whether it be men escaped from death at the front, such as soldiers on leave among the living, or hypnotised persons, or the dead evoked by a medium, it is strange how almost the only effect of contact with mystery is to increase—if that be possible—the insignificance of what we have to say. It was in this spirit that I greeted Robert, who still bore on his forehead a wound more imposing and more mysterious to me than the imprint left on the soil by some giant's foot. I did not dare ask him a single question and he made only the simplest remarks, and even then hardly at all different from what he would have said before the war, as if people, in spite of the war, continued to be the same as before; the tone of the conversations was the same; only the subject matter was different, and not so very different at that.

As near as I could gather, Robert seemed to have found in

the army occupations which enabled him gradually to forget that Morel had behaved as badly toward him as toward his uncle. Nevertheless, he still felt a deep friendship for him and was seized with sudden desires to see him again, but he continually put it off. I thought it more considerate toward Gilberte not to let Robert know that, if he wanted to find Morel, he had only to go to Mme. Verdurin's.

I told Robert shamefacedly how little we in Paris were conscious of the war and he said that, even in Paris, it was sometimes "rather astonishing." He referred to a Zeppelin raid there had been the night before and asked me if I had had a good view of it, but in the way he would formerly have spoken of some spectacle of great æsthetic beauty. At the front, I admit, one can understand how there might be a certain daring jauntiness in saying, "It's marvellous, what a pink! and that pale green!" at a time when one may be killed at any moment, but there was none of this in Saint-Loup, in Paris and speaking of an unimportant raid. I mentioned to him the beauty of the airplanes going up into the night. "And they are perhaps even more beautiful as they are coming down," he replied. "I admit it is very fine when they go up, when they start to form 'a constellation' and in so doing obey laws fully as precise as those which govern the real constellations, for what seems to you a mere show is the assembling of the squadrons, orders being given them, the starting out in pursuit, etc. But don't you prefer the instant when, after melting out of sight among the stars, they come into view again to give chase or to come down after the signal to break ranks, when they 'loop the loop', even the stars no longer keeping their places? And those sirens, weren't they Wagnerian, though?—which, by the way, was very appropriate to welcome the arrival of the Germans; it made a sort of national hymn, a *Wacht am Rhein* with the *Kronprinz* and the princesses in the imperial box; it made one wonder whether it was not Valkyries, rather than aviators, who were going up into the sky." He seemed to take pleasure in this comparison of aviators to Valkyries and explained it, more-

over, with purely musical reasoning. "By Jove, the music of the sirens certainly was like a *Ride of the Valkyries*. It is, indeed, only when the Germans come that one can hear some Wagner in Paris." From certain points of view, the comparison was not false. The city was like a shapeless black mass which suddenly moved from the depths of night into the light and up into the sky, where one by one the aviators rose upward in response to the shrieking call of the sirens, while, with a slower but more insidious and alarming motion, for their piercing gaze brought to mind the yet invisible object which perhaps was already near, the searchlights swept ceaselessly back and forth, ferreted out the enemy, encircled him with their beams until the airplanes, following their direction, should leap in pursuit to seize him. And in squadron after squadron the aviators shot up, Valkyrie-like, from the city, now transported into the sky. However, some corners of the earth, close beside the houses, became lighted up and I told Saint-Loup that, if he had been at home the evening before, while he was watching the "apocalypse" in the sky, he could have seen on earth (as in the burial of the Comte d'Orgaz by El Greco, where these different planes are parallel) a real vaudeville played by characters in their night clothes, whose well known names ought to have been reported to some successor of that Ferrari whose society notes had so often amused Saint-Loup and me that we had entertained ourselves by making up some of our own. And we would have done the same again that day as if there had been no war going on, but on a thoroughly war-time subject—"The Zeppelin Scare. Among those present: the Duchesse de Guermantes, superb in her nightgown; the Duc de Guermantes ineffable in pink pyjamas and bathrobe," etc., etc. "I am sure," Robert said, "in all the large hotels the American Jewesses were to be seen in their nightgowns, clasping to their scrawny bosoms the pearl necklaces that are going to make it possible for them to marry penniless dukes. On those evenings, the Ritz Hotel must look like the Free Trade Hotel."

I asked Saint-Loup whether this war had confirmed what we used to say at Doncières about past wars. I recalled to him some remarks he had himself forgotten about imitation battles worked out by generals-to-be. "The sham attack," I said, "is now hardly any longer possible in these operations which have to be prepared for in advance with such massing of artillery. And what you have told me since then about reconnoitering by airplane, which obviously you could not foresee, makes impossible the use of the Napoleonic stratagems." "You are quite mistaken," he replied. "Obviously this war is different from all previous wars and is itself made up of a series of wars, the latest one being always an innovation on the one that preceded it. We have to adapt ourselves to a new formula worked out by the enemy in order to defend ourselves from it, and then he starts over again to invent something new; but, as in all human affairs, the old tricks still work. Only last evening, the most intelligent of our military critics wrote, 'When the Germans wanted to liberate East Prussia, they began the operation with a powerful demonstration away to the south, against Warsaw, sacrificing ten thousand men to deceive the enemy. When, at the beginning of 1915, they organised Archduke Eugene's mobile army in order to relieve menaced Hungary, they spread the report that it was intended for an operation against Serbia. In the same way in 1800, the army that was going to be used against Italy was specifically designated as a reserve army and seemed to be intended not to cross the Alps, but to support the armies engaged on the northern fronts. Hindenburg's ruse of attacking Warsaw in order to mask the real attack on the Masurian Lakes region was patterned after one of Napoleon's plans of 1812.' You see, M. Bidou uses almost the very words you recall to me, which I had forgotten. And, since the war is not over, those ruses will be used again and they will succeed, for a trick is never finally exposed for all time; it worked once because it was effective and it will always work." And in fact, a long time after this conversation with Saint-Loup, while the attention

of the Allies was fixed on Petrograd, against which capital it was thought the Germans were beginning their march, they were preparing their most powerful offensive against Italy. Saint-Loup cited to me many other instances of imitating old military tactics—or, if you consider warfare a science, not an art, then of the application of permanent laws. "I do not mean to say," Saint-Loup continued, "that the art of war is a science, for that would be a contradiction of terms. And, even if warfare is a science, we find differences of opinion, disputes and contradictions among military scientists, which, by the way, are, from one point of view, merely a question of chronological development of military theory. This is rather reassuring, for, in so far as it is true, it does not necessarily mean error, but truth in the process of evolution." Later on he said to me, "Consider how in this war the ideas about the possibility of breaking through, for example, have changed. First it is thought possible; then they adopt the doctrine that the front line of defence is invulnerable; then that breaking through is possible but dangerous and that the objective must be destroyed before any advance is made (one cocksure journalist even wrote that it was the height of stupidity to maintain the opposite); then that, on the contrary, the attack should be made with very little artillery preparation; then they get to the point where they trace the theory of the invulnerability of the front line back to the War of 1870 and claim that it is incorrect for this present war, therefore correct in its time—incorrect in this war because of the greater massing of troops and the improvement in weapons of offence (see Bidou's article of July 2, 1918) changes which gave rise to the opinion, first that the next war would be very short, then that it would be very long, and finally revived belief in the possibility of a decisive victory. Bidou cites as examples the Allies on the Somme, and the Germans near Paris in 1918. In the same way at each German success people say, 'The lost ground does not matter, the towns captured do not matter; the important thing is to destroy the enemy's military power.' Then in

1918 the Germans in their turn take up this theory and Bidou at that time explains in a curious manner (July 2, 1918) how the capture of certain vital points, certain indispensable areas can decide the victory. But that's the way his mind works. He shewed how, if Russia was bottled up by sea, she would be beaten, and also that an army which is enclosed in a sort of prison camp is doomed to perish."

I should mention, however, that, even if war had not altered Saint-Loup's character, his mind, undergoing an evolution in which heredity played a large part, had acquired a keenness I had not known in him before. What a difference between the blond young fellow who used to be sought after by all the women who were, or aspired to be, up-to-date, and the serious conversationalist and close reasoner who played continually with words. In another generation and on another branch of the family tree, much as an actor might revive a part formerly played by Bressant or Delaunay, he was, as it were, a successor to M. de Charlus—the former with his rosy cheeks, his light complexion and his golden hair, the latter with his jet-black moustache and snow-white locks. It did not matter how much he disagreed with his uncle about the war, having allied himself with that fraction of the aristocracy which put France above everything, while M. de Charlus was at bottom a defeatist; he could shew to anyone who had not seen the actor who "created" the part how to excel in an argumentative rôle. "They say that Hindenburg is a revelation," I said to him. "An old one or one still to come," he retorted immediately. Instead of letting up on the enemy, he maintained, they ought to have let Mangin go ahead, and have crushed Austria and Germany and Europeanised Turkey, instead of Montenegrinising France. "But we will have the help of the United States," I objected. "Meanwhile, I see here nothing but the spectacle of Disunited States. Why not make larger concessions to Italy, through fear of unchristianising France?" "If your uncle Charlus should hear you!" I exclaimed. "While at bottom you would not be sorry if they should offend the

Pope a bit more, he thinks with despair of the harm that may be done to the throne of the Hapsburgs. And in that he says he is following the tradition of Talleyrand and the Congress of Vienna." "The day of the Congress of Vienna is past," he replied. "We must meet secret diplomacy with concrete diplomacy. My uncle is fundamentally an unregenerate monarchist, who could be made to swallow carps like Mme. Molé or scarps like Arthur Meyer, provided they were served up *à la Chambord*. He hates the tricolor so bitterly, I believe he would sooner fall in line behind the *bonnet rouge* rag, which he would in all good faith take to be the white flag of the Royalists." It is true, these remarks were merely witty and Saint-Loup was far from having the often profound originality of his uncle. But his disposition was as affable and charming as his uncle's was suspicious and jealous, and he had remained as rosy-cheeked and charming as at Balbec, under his shock of golden hair. The only thing in which his uncle would not have surpassed him was in that mental attitude of the Faubourg Saint-Germain which characterises even those who think they have rid themselves of it the most completely, and which gives them at once a silly self-satisfaction and a respect for intelligent men of humble origin, which really flourishes only among the nobility and which makes revolutions so unjust. Thanks to this combination of humility and pride, of acquired curiosity of mind and inborn sense of authority, M. de Charlus and Saint-Loup, by different routes and with opposite ideas, had become, one generation apart, intellectuals interested in every new idea and conversationalists who could not be silenced by any interruptions, so that a rather mediocre person, according to the frame of mind he happened to be in, might have found them either dazzlingly brilliant or unutterably tiresome.

I had walked along, turning over in my mind Saint-Loup's visit, and then made a sharp turn to go to Mme. Verdurin's; I had almost reached the Pont des Invalides. The street lamps, rather few in number on account of the Gothas, had

been lighted a little too soon, for the change to daylight-saving time had been determined on and fixed for the whole summer too early in the season, when night still came on rather quickly (just as furnaces are started up or extinguished at set dates) and above the city, illuminated for the night, there was still some daylight over a large part of the bluish sky—that sky that knew neither summer nor winter time schedules and ignored the fact that half-past eight was now half-past nine. Over all that part of the city which is dominated by the towers of the Trocadéro, the sky had the appearance of an immense turquoise-tinted sea which was slowly drawing back and already uncovering a long, faint line of black rocks, perhaps merely fishermen's nets hung side by side (in reality little clouds)—a now turquoise-coloured sea which, unknown to them, carries along with it the race of men, swept away in the immense revolution of the earth, that earth on which they are insane enough to continue their own revolutions and their vain and useless wars, like the one which was at that moment drenching France in blood. And then, as one gazed long at this indolent, too beautiful sky, which scorned to change its time schedule and, above the lighted city, lazily prolonged in bluish tones its lingering day, a dizziness overcame one—it was no longer a far-flung sea, but a vertical gradation of ice-blue glaciers. And the towers of the Trocadéro, which seemed so close to those huge, turquoise-coloured steps, were far removed from them, just as the two towers of some Swiss towns seem from afar off to be close against the sloping sides of the mountain peaks. I retraced my steps, but, by the time I left the Pont des Invalides, daylight had gone from the sky; there were scarcely any street lights and, stumbling here and there against rubbish cans, mistaking one route for another and mechanically following a bewildering maze of unlighted streets, without realising it, I suddenly found that I had reached the boulevards. There the impression of the Orient which I had recently experienced came back to me, and in another sense a vision of the Paris of 1815 replaced that of

the Directoire. As in 1815, there was a motley procession of the uniforms of the allied troops; among them some Africans in baggy red trousers and some white-turbanned Hindus sufficed to enable me to make of this Paris where I was walking an entire exotic city of the imagination in an Orient at the same time minutely correct as far as the costumes and complexions were concerned, but arbitrarily fantastic in its setting, just as Carpaccio made out of the town he lived in a Jerusalem or a Constantinople merely by gathering together there a crowd whose marvellous medley of colours was no more variegated than what I now had before my eyes. Walking behind two Zouaves, who scarcely seemed to notice him, I perceived a tall, stout man in a soft hat and long ulster, whose purplish face made me hesitate whether he was a certain actor or a painter, both of whom had been involved in countless notorious cases of sodomy. As I was certain in any case that I did not know him, I was greatly surprised when his glance met mine and I noticed a look of embarrassment on his face as he stopped short and came toward me, like a man who wishes to shew you that you are quite mistaken in thinking you have caught him doing something he would have preferred to keep secret. Just for a second I wondered who was greeting me—it was M. de Charlus. One can say that in his case the evolution of his disease or the revolution of his vice had reached that extreme point where the small original portion of individuality, the inherited qualities, are wholly blocked and headed off by a besetting generic defect or malady. M. de Charlus had gotten as far away as possible from his real self—or, rather, his true self was so completely masked by what he had become (which was not peculiar to him alone but characterises many inverts) that at first sight I had taken him for another of them as he strolled along behind those Zouaves right out on the boulevard—for another invert who was not M. de Charlus, not a highborn gentleman, nor a man of imagination and intelligence, and who did not resemble the Baron in any way except by that appearance common to all

of them, which now concealed from sight everything else about him, at least until one looked very closely. That is how, wishing to call on Mme. Verdurin, I happened to meet M. de Charlus. And assuredly I would not have met him at her house, as in former times; the breach between them had grown still wider and Mme. Verdurin took advantage of existing conditions to discredit him still further. Having for a long time declared that he seemed to her played out, used up and more out-of-date in his affected audacity than the most oldfashioned person imaginable, she now summed up this criticism and turned all her listeners against him by saying that he was "terribly pre-war." According to the "little clan," the war had made a chasm between him and the present which relegated him to a past that was completely dead. In addition—and this was more for the benefit of men in politics, because they were less well informed—she represented him as being as much of a "back number" and as completely "out of it" socially as he was intellectually. "He sees nobody and is invited nowhere," she said to M. Bontemps, whom she found easy to convince. And, incidentally, there was some truth in these remarks. M. de Charlus's position certainly had changed. Caring less and less for society, having, because of his crabbed disposition, quarreled with most of those who made up the cream of society, and being too conscious of his social standing to condescend to a resumption of friendly relations, he lived in a state of relative isolation, which was not due to ostracism by the aristocracy, as in the case of Mme. de Villeparisis at the time of her death, but which, for two reasons, seemed worse in the eyes of the public. M. de Charlus's unsavoury reputation, now widespread, caused uninformed persons to think that that was the reason why certain people did not call upon him, whereas actually he had of his own accord refused to associate with them, so that what was really the consequence of his morose character appeared to be an expression of the contempt of those on whom he vented his ill humour. And furthermore, Mme. de Villeparisis had had one great bul-

wark, the family, whereas M. de Charlus had multiplied the quarrels in that direction. Besides, especially on the old Faubourg, Courvoisier side, the family had seemed to him uninteresting. And he who, in argument with the Courvoisiers, had said such daring things against art, little suspected that what a Bergotte, for example, would have found most interesting about him was his relationship with that old Faubourg, his skill in describing the almost provincial life which his cousins from the Rue de la Chaise led in the Place du Palais-Bourbon or the Rue Garancière. And, coming down to a less ethereal and more practical point of view, Mme. Verdurin pretended to believe that M. de Charlus was not French. "Just what nationality is he; isn't he Austrian?" M. Verdurin asked with an innocent air. "Oh, no, not at all!" the Comtesse Molé replied, her first impulse responding to common sense rather than malice. "No, he is Prussian," declared the "Mistress". "I assure you, I know it for a certainty. He told us often enough that he was a hereditary member of the House of Lords of Prussia and one of the higher nobility." "But the Queen of Naples once told me . . ." "You know she's an awful spy," exclaimed Mme. Verdurin, who had not forgotten the attitude which that dethroned sovereign had assumed one evening at her house. "I know it, and most positively, too. She made her living that way. If we had a more energetic government, all such folk ought to be in an internment camp, and good riddance! In any case, you would do well not to have that fine crowd calling on you, because I know that the Minister of the Interior has his eye on them and your house would be put under surveillance. Nothing will ever convince me that Charlus did not carry on a systematic espionage in my house for two years." And, perhaps thinking that people might feel some doubt as to what interest even the most detailed reports concerning the organisation of the "little clan" could possibly have for the German government, Mme. Verdurin added in a quietly subtle manner, well knowing that the importance of what she said would seem greater if she did not

raise her voice, "I assure you I said to my husband the very first day, 'I don't like the way that man has slipped into our circle; there's something shady about it.' We had a country place on a very high point at the head of a little bay. He had certainly been commissioned by the Germans to prepare a submarine base there. There were certain things about him which surprised me, but which I now understand. For instance, at first he could not come by train with the other guests. Then I myself was good enough to offer him a room in the château; but no, he preferred to stay at Doncières, where there were a great many soldiers. All that smelt to high heaven of espionage." As for the first of the accusations she launched at Baron de Charlus, that of being out-of-date, society folk were only too glad to agree with her. But, as a matter of fact, they were ingrates, for M. de Charlus was in a certain sense their poet; it was he who had been able to discover in the gay world about him a sort of poetry containing elements of history, beauty, picturesqueness, humour, light-hearted elegance. But society folk, unable to understand this poetry and seeing none in their own lives, looked for it elsewhere and esteemed far above M. de Charlus men who were far inferior to him but who affected scorn for society and, instead, preached advanced social and economic theories. M. de Charlus loved to repeat accidentally lyrical remarks of the Duchesse de X... and describe her ingeniously graceful gowns, speaking of her as a most charming woman, which made him appear rather weak-minded in the eyes of those society women who considered that the Duchesse de X... was an uninteresting numskull and that dresses are made to be worn but not commented on, and who, more intelligent than the Duchess (in their own opinion, at least) flocked to the Sorbonne, or to the Chamber of Deputies if Deschanel was to speak. In short, society folk had lost their enthusiasm for M. de Charlus, not because they had seen through, but because they had never seen at all, his unusual intellectual qualities. They considered him "pre-war," out-of-date, because the very folk

who are the least fitted to judge of other people's qualities are the ones who are the most given to classifying people on the basis of what is fashionable at the moment; before they have gotten the best out of, or even just skimmed the surface of, the men of talent of one generation, the latter must all be discarded in a heap because lo! here comes the code of a new generation—which will not be understood any better than was the last one. As for the second charge, that of German sympathies, the "middle-of-the-road" psychology of society folk made them inclined to reject it, but it had found a tireless and particularly cruel sponsor in Morel, who had succeeded in retaining the standing with the press and even in society which M. de Charlus, with equal effort in each case, had been able to win for him but unable later to undermine; he persecuted the Baron with an implacable hatred, which was not only cruel of him, but doubly reprehensible, for, whatever had been his precise relations with the Baron, he had known a side that the latter hid from most people, his deep-seated kindness. M. de Charlus had acted toward the violinist with such generosity, such delicacy of feeling, and had been so scrupulously careful always to keep his word with him, that the impression Charlie had carried away was not at all that of a man of vicious habits (at the worst, he regarded the Baron's weakness as a disease) but of the most high-minded man he had ever known, a man of great tenderness, a sort of saint. He recognised this so fully that, even after they had become estranged, he used to say to parents in all sincerity, "You can trust your son to him; his influence over him will be only of the best." Therefore, when he endeavoured in his articles to hurt the Baron's feelings, in his own mind what he was scoffing at was not the Baron's vices, but his virtues. A little while before the war, short *chroniques,* transparent for the "initiated," as they were called, began to do M. de Charlus great injury. Of one of them, entitled *The Misadventures of a Dowager in –us; or, The Last Years of the Baroness,* Mme. Verdurin bought fifty copies to lend around among her acquaintances,

and M. Verdurin used to read it aloud, declaring that even Voltaire did not write better than that. Since the beginning of the war, the tone of these articles had changed. Not only was the Baron's perversion exposed, but also his alleged Germanic origin. "Frau Bosch" and "Frau von den Bosch" were the nicknames usually given him. One article of a poetic nature bore the title *Une Allemande,* borrowed from certain dance tunes by Beethoven. Finally, two short stories, *The Uncle from America and the Aunt from Frankfort* and *Hero of the Rear,* read in galley proof by the "little clan," rejoiced the heart of Brichot himself, who exclaimed, "Let's hope the all-high and all-powerful Anastasia does not use the blue pencil on us." The articles themselves were more subtle than these silly titles. Their style was patterned after Bergotte, but in a way that perhaps only I could detect, for the following reason. Bergotte's way of writing had not influenced Morel in the least. The fertilisation, so to speak, had come about in a very peculiar manner, so unusual that that is the only reason I mention it here. I have already described elsewhere Bergotte's peculiar way of choosing and pronouncing his words in conversation. Morel, who had associated with him over a long period of time, gave "impersonations" of him in which he imitated his voice perfectly and used the very same words Bergotte would have selected. And now Morel in these articles transcribed conversations in the Bergotte manner, but without subjecting them to the transpositions that would have made them resemble Bergotte's writings. As few people had ever talked with Bergotte, they did not recognise the tone of the articles, as it was different from his written style. This oral fertilisation is so unusual that I wanted to note it here. Incidentally, it produces only sterile blossoms.

Morel, who was in the publicity department and whose illegal military status was not known, made believe—his French blood boiling in his veins like the juice of the grapes of Combray—that he was not satisfied to stay in an office during the war, and pretended that he wanted to enlist

(when all he needed to do was to report for duty) while Mme. Verdurin did everything she could to persuade him to remain in Paris. It is true, she expressed indignation that M. de Cambremer at his age was attached to a regimental staff, and concerning every man who did not attend her receptions she would say, "And how did that fellow succeed in getting under cover?" And, if someone stated that "that fellow" had been in the front line from the very first day, she would reply, either lying brazenly or because she had fallen into the habit of making inaccurate statements, "Not a bit of it; he has not set foot outside Paris. He is doing something or other very dangerous, like driving a cabinet minister about. Take it from me; I assure you it is true. I was told this by someone who saw him." But it was very different for the "faithful"; she did not want to let them go to the front, considering the war "a great big bore" that made them abandon her. And so she used every possible means to have them stay in Paris, as this would give her the double pleasure of having them to dinner and, before they came or after they had gone, branding them as slackers. But still it was necessary that the "faithful" one lend a hand in this maneuvering to stay behind, and she was heart-broken to see Morel pretend to wish to "kick over the traces"; so she said to him, "You are mistaken; you are more useful in that office than you would be at the front. The essential thing is to be of service, to be really part of the war, to be of it and in it. On the one hand there are the men who are in it, and on the other there are the slackers. Very well, *you* are in it and don't worry, everybody knows it and nobody is throwing any stones at you." In like manner, but under different circumstances, although men were not so scarce at that time and she was not obliged, as now, to have principally women at her affairs, if one of the men lost his mother, she would not hesitate to urge that he could, without impropriety, continue to come to her receptions. "One carries his grief in his heart," she would argue. "Now, if you wanted to go to a dance"—she did not give

any herself "—I would be the first to advise you not to; but here, at my small Wednesday gatherings, or in a box at the theatre, no one would be offended. We all know you feel your sorrow deeply." But now the men were scarcer and mourning was more general; but the latter was not needed to keep men from going to social affairs, the war itself was enough. She tried to persuade them that they could be more useful to France by staying in Paris, just as she formerly would have assured them that the "dear departed one" would be happier to see them enjoying themselves. In spite of everything, however, she had very few men; perhaps she sometimes regretted that she had brought about a break with M. de Charlus that could not now be mended.

But, if M. de Charlus and Mme. Verdurin were no longer on friendly terms, they both—with some slight differences of no great importance—continued, as if nothing had changed, she to hold receptions, and he to pursue his own form of amusement. At Mme. Verdurin's, for example, Cottard now attended in the uniform of a colonel of *l'Ile du Rêve,* resembling rather closely the uniform of a Haitian admiral, with a broad, sky-blue ribbon which recalled the ribbon of *Les Enfants de Marie.* As for M. de Charlus, finding himself now in a city whence the grown men, who had until then been his preference, had disappeared, he did like some Frenchmen who have a fondness for women when in France, but who live in the colonies—he had, at first from necessity, become accustomed to, and then had developed a liking for, young boys.

But, as it turned out, the above-mentioned familiar feature of the Verdurin salon disappeared rather quickly, for Cottard soon died, "bravely facing the enemy," as the newspapers declared, although he had not stirred from Paris, but had, as a matter of fact, overworked himself, considering his age. He was shortly followed by M. Verdurin, whose death brought sorrow to only one person, namely—who would have believed it?—Elstir. I had been able to study the latter's work from a more or less detached point of view.

But he, especially as he grew older, superstitiously associated it with the fashionable world which had supplied him with his models and which, after having thus by the alchemy of subjective impressions been transformed through him into works of art, had furnished a public to admire them. More and more inclined to believe absolutely that a considerable part of beauty is inherent in the objects themselves, just as, at the beginning, he had worshipped in Mme. Elstir the somewhat heavy type of beauty which he had sought after and lovingly fondled in paintings and tapestries, so he saw disappear with M. Verdurin one of the last vestiges of the social setting—a setting as perishable, as ephemeral as the very styles in dress which constitute a part of it—which maintains an art and certifies to its authenticity, just as the French Revolution, in destroying the elegances of the eighteenth century, would have broken the heart of a painter of *fêtes galantes,* or as the disappearance of Montmartre and the Moulin de la Galette would have distressed Renoir. But he particularly saw disappear with M. Verdurin the eyes and brain which had most correctly grasped the meaning of his work and in which his work lived, as it were, like a cherished memory. It is true that a younger generation had come forward which loved painting, but a very different style of painting, and it had not, as had M. Swann and M. Verdurin, received lessons in good taste from Whistler and lessons in truth from Monet which might enable it to judge Elstir's work fairly. Therefore, upon the death of M. Verdurin, although they had been estranged for many years, he felt more alone than ever and it was for him as though a little of the beauty of his work had gone, together with a little of the appreciation of that beauty which still remained in the world.

As for the change which had taken place in M. de Charlus's form of enjoyment, it was intermittent. Keeping up an extensive correspondence with soldiers at the front, he did not suffer from any lack of fairly mature men on leave. In short, speaking generally, Mme. Verdurin continued to hold

her receptions and M. de Charlus continued to indulge his tastes as if nothing had changed. And yet for two years that immense human being called "France" (the colossal beauty of which, even from the purely material point of view, one does not feel unless one perceives the cohesion of the millions of individuals who, like multiform cells, crowd it full to its outermost perimeter, like so many minute interior polygons, and unless one views it on the same scale as a single cell or a microscopic organism would view a human being, namely, as huge as Mont Blanc) had been face-to-face in a gigantic collective quarrel with that other immense agglomeration of individuals, "Germany." In the days when I believed what people said, hearing first Germany, then Bulgaria and then Greece protest their peaceful intentions, I would have been tempted to have faith in their declarations. But since living with Françoise and Albertine had gotten me into the habit of suspecting them of harbouring thoughts and schemes which they did not tell me about, I did not let any statement from William II, Ferdinand of Bulgaria or Constantine of Greece, however fair it seemed, mislead my intuitive understanding of what each of them was contriving. It is true that my quarrels with Françoise and Albertine had been merely private quarrels, which involved only the life of one little spiritual cell, namely, a human being. But, just as there are animal bodies and human bodies, that is to say, combinations of cells each of which, as compared with a single cell, is as big as a mountain, in the same way there are huge organised agglomerations of individuals, which are called "nations"; their existence simply repeats on an amplified scale the existence of the component cells, and whoever is unable to comprehend the mystery, the reactions and the laws of the latter, will utter only empty words when he comes to speak of struggles between nations. But if he has mastered the psychology of the individual, then these colossal masses of conglomerate individuals, lined up opposite one another, will take on in his eyes a beauty more imposing than the struggle that

springs merely from the conflict of two natures, and he will view them on the scale on which tiny organisms, so microscopic that ten thousand would not measure one cubic millimeter, would view the body of a man of great size. Just so for some time that great body, "France," filled to its perimeter with millions of multiform little polygons, and that other body, "Germany," filled with still more polygons, had been having a quarrel such as, to a certain extent, individuals have.

But the blows they exchanged were governed by the rules of that mass prize fighting the principles of which Saint-Loup had explained to me, and since, even considered from the point of view of the individual, they were gigantic aggregations, their quarrel assumed immense, magnificent forms, like the upheaving of an ocean of millions of waves which is endeavouring to break down an age-old line of cliffs; or like gigantic glaciers which seek with their slowly destructive oscillations to cut a path through the encircling ring of mountains. Notwithstanding all this, life went on almost unchanged for many persons who have figured in this narrative and particularly for M. de Charlus and the Verdurins, just as if the Germans had not been so near them, because a standing menace—although in this case, to be sure, the peril had now been removed—leaves us completely indifferent if we do not picture to ourselves what it really is. People usually go about their pleasures without ever reflecting that, if the etiolating and moderating influences should happen to cease, the proliferation of the microscopic organisms would reach its maximum, that is to say, making a leap of several million leagues in a few days, it would grow from one cubic millimeter to a mass one million times larger than the sun, having at the same time destroyed all the oxygen and all the substances we live on, so that there would no longer be any human race or any animals or even any earth; nor do they reflect, on the other hand, that the mad, ceaseless activity hidden behind the apparent immutability of the sun might bring about an irremediable and entirely possible

catastrophe in the ether. They go about their business without giving a thought to either of these two worlds, one of them too minute, and the other too immense, for people to perceive the cosmic menaces they hold imminent all about us. In the same way, the Verdurins (and soon Mme. Verdurin alone, after the death of her husband) gave dinner parties and M. de Charlus went about his pleasures, hardly realising that the Germans were within an hour's automobile ride of Paris—held in check, it is true, by a bloody barrier constantly renewed. But one might say the Verdurins were reminded of this because they had a political salon, where the situation, not only of the armies, but also of the fleets, was discussed every evening. They did, indeed, give a thought to the hecatombs of regiments annihilated, of passengers swallowed up by the sea, but, by two contrary operations, what concerns our well-being is multiplied, and what does not is divided, by a figure so enormous that the death of millions of people whom we do not know barely touches us, and almost less unpleasantly than a current of air. Mme. Verdurin, in distress at not being able to get any *croissants* to dip in her coffee to relieve her headaches, had obtained from Cottard a prescription permitting her to have them made for her in a certain restaurant we have mentioned. This had been almost as difficult to get out of the public authorities as the nomination of a general. Mme. Verdurin resumed her first *croissant* the morning when the newspapers were telling of the sinking of the *Lusitania.* While dipping the *croissant* in her coffee and giving her newspaper a fillip now and then so as to make it lie open without her having to interrupt the dipping process, she exclaimed, "How terrible! It is more awful than the most frightful catastrophes!" But the drowning of all those people must have impressed her with only the millionth part of its real horror, because, even while making these deeply grieved comments with her mouth full of *croissant* and coffee, an expression of sweet contentment suffused her face, due

probably to the pleasing savour of the *croissant,* so effective against headaches.

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M. de Charlus went further than merely failing to desire ardently to see France victorious; without admitting it to himself, he wished, if not that Germany should triumph, at least that she should not be crushed, as everybody else was hoping would happen. The reason for this was that in these quarrels the great groupings of individuals called "nations" behave to a certain degree like individuals themselves. The reasoning that guides them is entirely subjective and is being continually modified by their passions, as in the case of people at odds in a lovers' quarrel or a domestic dispute, such as a son's disagreement with his father, or that of a cook with her mistress or a wife with her husband. The nation that is in the wrong nevertheless believes that it is in the right—as was the case with Germany—and the nation that is in the right sometimes advances arguments in support of its claims which it considers unanswerable only because they are in accordance with its passions. In quarrels between individuals, in order to be absolutely convinced that one or the other party is in the right, the surest way is to be that party himself; an onlooker will never uphold him as completely. Now, in a nation the individual, if he is really a part of the nation, is only one cell in the larger individual, the nation. Misleading people by propaganda is a meaningless phrase. If you had told the French that they were going to be defeated, not one of them but would have been as heartbroken as if you had told him that he was himself going to be killed by the Big Berthas. The real misleading propaganda is practiced on oneself through that hopefulness which is a sort of instinct of self-preservation in a nation—if one is really a live part of that nation. In order to be blind to what was unjust in the cause of that composite individual, Germany, or to recognise at all times what was just in the cause of that other composite individual, France, the surest way was not for a German

to lose his reason or for a Frenchman to keep his, but for each of them to be patriotic. M. de Charlus had rare qualities of character and was capable of pity, generosity, affection, devotion but, on the other hand, had no patriotism, for a number of reasons, among which the fact of having had a Bavarian duchess for a mother may have played its part. He was consequently one of the body cells of both France and Germany. If I had been devoid of patriotism, instead of feeling myself to be one of the body cells of France, it seems to me that my way of looking at the quarrel would not have been the same as it might formerly have been. In my youth, when I believed whatever I was told, if I had heard the German government protest its good faith, I would doubtless have been tempted not to question it, but I had now for a long time known that our thoughts do not always agree with our words.

But after all, I can only surmise what I would have done if I had not been actively involved, if I had not been part of the active participant, France, just as, in my quarrels with Albertine, when my sad expression and the clutch at my throat were part of my personality passionately interested in my cause, I could not achieve detachment. M. de Charlus's detachment, however, was complete. Consequently, from the moment he became only an onlooker, everything was bound to lead him to be a German sympathiser, by reason of his living in France without being really French. He was very keen-witted; in every country the fools are the most numerous; there is no doubt that, had he lived in Germany, he would have been exasperated by the fools in that country defending an unjust cause with foolishness and passion; but, living in France, the French fools defending a just cause with foolishness and passion exasperated him quite as much. The logic of passion, even in the service of the most righteous cause, can always be refuted by a man who remains dispassionate. M. de Charlus exposed subtly every illogical argument of the patriots. The smug satisfaction that an imbecile takes in the justice

of his cause and the certainty of victory are peculiarly irritating. M. de Charlus was irritated by the triumphant optimism of people who did not know Germany and her strength as he did, who believed each month that the next month would see her completely crushed, and a year later made a fresh prophecy with not a whit less confidence, as if they had not already, with just as much assurance, made other false prophecies, which, however, they had entirely forgotten and which, if cited to them, they would dismiss with the explanation, "That was something quite different." Now, M. de Charlus, although he was by no means shallow-minded, might perhaps not have understood in the field of art that the critics of Monet exhibited the same mental twist when they replied, "It is not the same thing at all" to those who reminded them that the same things had been said about Delacroix. And finally, M. de Charlus was compassionate; the idea of anyone being conquered pained him; he always favoured the weaker party; he did not read the reports of trials in order not to have to suffer in his own flesh and blood the agony of the condemned man and the torture of being unable to assassinate the judge, the hangman and the crowd, overjoyed to see that "justice has been done." He was sure in any case that France could no longer be conquered and, on the other hand, he knew that the Germans were suffering from hunger and would be obliged one day or another to surrender unconditionally. And this idea, too, was made more disagreeable for him by the fact that he was living in France. His recollections of Germany were, after all, remote, whereas the Frenchmen who were talking of crushing Germany with a glee that was offensive to him were folk whose failings were well known to him and their very faces repugnant. In such cases, we feel more sympathy for those we do not know and whom we can only picture in imagination than for those who are very close to us in the cheapening contact of daily life (unless, of course, we are ourselves part of them and one with them); patriotism performs this miracle, that we are as passionate for our

country as we are for ourselves in a lovers' quarrel. Thus the war was for M. de Charlus a culture extraordinarily productive of those hatreds which in him sprang up in an instant and lasted only a very short while, but made him for the time being ready to go to any violent extremes. As he read the newspapers, the triumphant air of the editors, daily representing Germany as being at a low ebb, "The Beast at bay; reduced to impotence," whereas the very opposite was only too true, made him wild with rage over their jaunty, ferocious stupidity. The newspapers were at that time edited partly by well known men who found therein a way of "doing their bit," men like Brichot, Norpois, Legrandin. M. de Charlus would dream of meeting them and crushing them with bitterest sarcasm. Always specially well informed along that line, he was familiar with the irregular sexual habits of many a man who, thinking they were not known, took particular pleasure in proclaiming the failings in that respect of the sovereigns of "the predatory empires," of Wagner and so on. He burned with a desire to meet them face to face, rub their noses in their own vice before the whole world and leave these insulters of a beaten enemy disgraced and gasping. And finally, M. de Charlus had still other reasons, of a more special nature, for being the Germanophile he was. One was that, a well bred man himself, he had lived a great deal among well bred men, upright men, men of honour, who will not shake hands with a scoundrel; he knew their high and uncompromising standards; he knew them to be unmoved by the tears of a man whom they expel from their club or with whom they refuse to fight a duel, even though their act of moral integrity should cost the life of the mother of the black sheep. In spite of himself and notwithstanding his admiration for England, that same England, impeccable and incapable of a lie but nevertheless preventing milk and wheat from entering Germany, was in a way that nation of men of honour, of certificated witnesses, of judges of *affaires d'honneur;* whereas he knew that vicious and rascally per-

sons can have their better side, like certain characters in Dostoievsky, and I could never understand why he put the Germans in the same category, their lying and trickery not necessarily implying also kind-heartedness, which they do not seem to have displayed. And lastly, a final trait will complete this analysis of M. de Charlus's pro-Germanism. It could be traced, through a very strange reaction, to his "Charlism." He considered the Germans very homely, perhaps because they were too nearly of his own flesh and blood. He was infatuated with Moroccans, but especially with Anglo-Saxons, who were to him like living statues by Phidias. Now, in him sexual pleasure was accompanied by a certain cruel idea, the full force of which I did not realise at that time—the man he loved seemed to him like an adorable hangman. If he had taken sides against the Germans, he would have thought he was acting as he did only in moments of voluptuous passion, namely, contrary to his kindly nature, in other words, inflamed with passion for seductive vice and trampling on homely virtue. It was the same also when Rasputin was murdered (a murder in which, by the way, people were surprised to find such a stamp of Russian colour) at a supper *à la* Dostoievsky—an impression which would have been much stronger still if the public had known about the whole affair what M. de Charlus knew so well—because life disappoints us so much that in the end we come to believe that literature has no relation to it and we are dumbfounded to see that the precious ideas we found in books are spread right out before us in everyday life, naturally and freely, without fear of being spoiled by handling, and that a supper, a murder—a Russian incident—have something truly Russian about them.

The war was dragging on interminably and the people who had announced some years before, "on the best authority," that peace negotiations had begun, even specifying the clauses of the peace treaty, did not take the trouble any more, when they talked with you, to make excuses for their

inaccurate information. They had forgotten all about it and were ready to do the same thing over again, in all sincerity —and then forget about it just as quickly. It was the period when there were constant Gotha raids; the air hummed continually with the watchful, noisy vibrations of the French airplanes. But sometimes the siren would rend the air, like the shrieking call of a Valkyrie—the only German music heard since the beginning of the war—until the firemen announced that the danger was over and at the same time, like some invisible street urchin, the *berloque* made a sort of running commentary on the good news, launching its joyous cry into the air at regular intervals.

M. de Charlus was surprised to see that even men like Brichot, who had been militarists before the war and had blamed France, especially, for her lukewarmness in this respect, now criticised Germany not only for her exaggerated militarism but even for her admiration for the army. It is true, they changed their tune at once when it was a question of letting up a bit on the war against Germany, and they denounced the pacifists with good reason. But, for example, Brichot, having consented, in spite of his failing eyesight, to give some lectures on certain books that had appeared in the neutral countries, praised to the skies a Swiss novel in which the author ridiculed as sowing the seed of militarism, a representation of two children falling in symbolic admiration before a dragoon. There were additional reasons why this mockery should have displeased M. de Charlus, who considered that a dragoon can be a very handsome object. But what he especially could not understand was Brichot's admiration, if not of the book (which the Baron had not read) at any rate of its spirit, so different from that which had animated Brichot before the war. At that time, anything a military man did was good, even the questionable acts of General de Boisdeffre, the falsifications and machinations of Colonel Du Paty de Clam, the forgery of Colonel Henry. By what extraordinary right-about-face (in reality it was only another aspect of the very noble passion of

patriotism which, militarist when struggling against Dreyfusism with its anti-militarist tendencies, was forced to become almost anti-militarist itself, now that it was struggling against super-militarist Germania) did Brichot exclaim, "Oh, what a marvellously beautiful spectacle, worthy of attracting the attention of the youth of a century entirely given over to brutality and worshipping nothing but violence—a dragoon! One can just imagine the generation of worthless bashi-bazouks that will grow up under the cult of such manifestations of brute force!" "I declare!" M. de Charlus once exclaimed to me. "You know Brichot and Cambremer. Well, every time I see them, they talk to me about Germany's extraordinary ignorance of psychology. Now, between ourselves, do you think that until now they themselves had paid much attention to that subject and that even today they are capable of shewing an understanding of it? And yet, believe me, I do not exaggerate when I say that, even when speaking of the greatest German—Nietzsche, or Goethe—you will hear Brichot say, 'with the usual ignorance of psychology which characterises the Teutonic race.' Obviously, there are things in war that grieve me more, but you will agree that this is exasperating. Norpois is more intelligent, I admit, although he has been consistently wrong from the very beginning. But how can you explain it that these articles arouse universal admiration? My dear sir, you know as well as I what Brichot really amounts to; I like him very much, even since the schism which has cut me off from his little sect and because of which I see him much less often. Even so, I have a certain regard for this high-school principal, very well educated and a good talker, and I admit it is pathetic that, at his age and losing ground as he has been doing noticeably for some years past, he should have gone and 'reënlisted', as he puts it. But, after all, good intentions are one thing and talent is another and Brichot was never talented. I admit that I share his admiration for certain things about the present war that are really great. It is strange, to say the least, that a blind

partisan of antiquity like Brichot—who could not find enough sarcasm to hurl at Zola for discovering more poetry in a workingman's home or a mine than in historical palaces, or at Goncourt for ranking Diderot above Homer, and Watteau above Raphael—should repeat to us incessantly that Thermopylæ and even Austerlitz were nothing compared with Vauquois. This time, moreover, the public, which had resisted the modernists in literature and art, follows them in war, because it's the fashion to think thus and also because small minds are overwhelmed, not by the beauty, but by the immensity of the action. 'Kolossal' is now written only with a 'k', but at bottom it is the colossal everybody is bowing down to.

"It's a strange thing, moreover," M. de Charlus added in the sharp little voice he sometimes assumed. "I hear folk who look very happy all day long, and who drink excellent cocktails, declare that they will never be able to go through with this war, that their hearts will never stand it, that they can think of nothing else, that they will die suddenly some day—and the most extraordinary thing about it is that this actually does happen! How strange it is! Is it a case of faulty nutrition due to their taking into their stomachs only poorly prepared food, or because, in order to prove their devotion, they yoke themselves to useless tasks which interfere with the special diet that was keeping them alive? However that may be, I note a surprising number of these strange premature deaths—premature, at any rate, as far as the wishes of the deceased were concerned. I have forgotten what I started to tell you—that Brichot and Norpois admired this war, but what a peculiar way they have of speaking of it! In the first place, have you noticed the rapidly increasing number of new expressions Norpois employs, which, when they finally wear out through being used every day—for, really, he is tireless and I think the death of my Aunt Villeparisis must have rejuvenated him—are immediately replaced by other commonplace terms? I remember that you used to be amused to note these styles in

language which spring up, last awhile and then disappear, such as, 'He who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind', 'The dogs may bark; the caravan moves on', '"Give me a good policy and I will give you good finances," said Baron Louis.' There are some symptoms which it would be an exaggeration to take tragically but which it is right to take seriously, such as 'Working for the King of Prussia.' (This one, by the way, has been revived, as was inevitable.) Well, since then, alas, how many have I seen die! We have had the 'scrap of paper', the 'predatory empires', the famous 'Kultur', which consists in 'assassinating defenceless women and children', 'Victory is on the side that can hold out a quarter of an hour longer than the other, as the Japanese say', the 'Germano-Turanians', 'scientific barbarity'—'if we wish to win the war', to quote Mr. Lloyd George's strong expression—in short, there is no end to them, and then there's the 'keen fighting edge of our troops' and their 'grit.' Even the syntax of our good friend Norpois is undergoing, by reason of the war, a change as profound as has occurred in the way of making bread or the speed of railroad traffic. Have you noticed that the good man, eager to announce his wishes as if they were truths just about to become reality, does not dare, however, use the simple future tense, which might be contradicted by subsequent events, so he has adopted the expression 'be capable of' as a sign of this tense?" I had to admit to M. de Charlus that I did not understand very well what he meant. (I ought to note here that the Duc de Guermantes did not at all share his brother's pessimism. Besides which, he was as much of an Anglophile as M. de Charlus was an Anglophobe. And finally, he regarded M. Caillaux as a traitor who deserved a thousand times over to be shot. When his brother asked for proofs of this treason, M. de Guermantes replied that, if only the people who sign a paper saying "I have been a traitor" were to be convicted, the crime of treason would never be punished. But in case I might not have an opportunity to revert to this subject later, I will note here

also that, two years later, the Duc de Guermantes, still under the influence of the most pronounced anti-Caillautism, met an English military attaché and his wife, a remarkably well read couple, with whom he became friendly—as with the three charming ladies at the time of the Dreyfus case —and that the very first day, speaking of Caillaux, whose conviction he deemed certain and his guilt obvious, he was dumbfounded to hear the charming, cultured couple say, "But he will probably be acquitted; there is absolutely nothing against him." M. de Guermantes tried to argue that M. de Norpois in testifying had said, with his eyes fixed on the terrified Caillaux, "You are the Giolitti of France; yes, monsieur Caillaux, you are the Giolitti of France." But the charming couple smiled, made fun of M. de Norpois, cited instances of his senile idiocy and concluded that he had made that remark before a M. Caillaux who was "terrified" in the columns of *Le Figaro* but who in real life had smiled sardonically. The Duc de Guermantes was not slow to alter his opinion. To attribute this change to the influence of an Englishwoman does not seem as extraordinary now as it would have appeared if one had foretold it even in 1919, when the English were calling the Germans nothing but "Huns" and were demanding ferocious punishment of the guilty persons. But they, too, were soon to change their opinion and approve every decision that might cause sorrow to France and give aid and comfort to Germany.) But to come back to M. de Charlus. "Oh yes, you do," he said, in reply to my statement that I did not understand what he referred to. "In Norpois's articles 'be capable of' is the sign of the future tense, that is to say, the sign of his wishes —and, be it said, of all of us," he added, perhaps not with entire sincerity. "It is easy to see that, if 'be capable of' had not become simply the sign of the future tense, one might, strictly speaking, consider a country as the subject of this verb, as, for example, every time Brichot* says, 'America would not be capable of remaining indifferent to

* This appears to be an error for Norpois.—*F.A.B.*

these repeated violations of right', 'The bicephalous monarchy would not be capable of not repenting and mending its ways.' It is clear that such statements express Norpois's wishes (as, also, mine * and yours) but, after all, there the expression may still retain its original meaning, for a country can be 'capable', America can be 'capable', even the 'bicephalous' monarchy can be 'capable' (in spite of the eternal ignorance of psychology) but there can no longer be any uncertainty when Brichot † writes, 'These systematic devastations would not be capable of persuading the neutral countries', 'The lake region would not be capable of failing to fall into the hands of the Allies within a very short time', 'The results of these neutralist elections would not be capable of reflecting the opinion of the great majority of the citizens.' Now, it is certain that these devastations, regions and election results are inanimate things that cannot be 'capable'. By means of this formula Norpois simply lays upon the neutral countries the injunction (which I regret to note they do not seem to have any intention of heeding) to abandon their neutrality and he enjoins upon the lake region not to remain any longer in the hands of the Boches." (M. de Charlus put the same sort of daring into uttering the word "Boche" as formerly, in the Balbec train, into speaking of men whose taste does not run to women.) "Furthermore, have you noticed how craftily, ever since 1914, Norpois begins his articles addressed to the neutral countries? He commences by declaring that, of course, France has no right to seek to influence the policy of Italy or Rumania or Bulgaria, etc. It is for these countries alone, in entire independence and consulting only the national interests, to decide whether they should abandon their neutrality or not. But if these initial declarations of the article (what would formerly have been called 'the exordium') are so very fine and disinterested, the section that follows is usually much less so. 'However,'

* In the French text, *siens* would seem to be a misprint for *miens*. Note the end of the second sentence preceding.—*F.A.B.*

† This appears to be an error for Norpois.—*F.A.B.*

Norpois goes on to say in substance, 'it is very clear that only the nations that have lined up on the side of Right and Justice will derive a material benefit from the struggle. It is not to be expected that the countries which, following the policy of minimum exertion, have not put their swords at the service of the Allies will be rewarded by the latter with the gift of former territories of theirs, in which their oppressed brethren have for centuries been crying for deliverance.' Having taken this first step toward counselling their entering the war, nothing any longer stops Norpois; it is now not only on the fundamental question of going in, but regarding the date for doing so that he gives advice in a more and more undisguised manner. 'Most assuredly,' he declares, like a wolf in sheep's clothing, to use one of his own favourite expressions, 'it is for Italy and Rumania alone to decide the suitable time and proper manner for them to intervene. However, they surely know that, if they hesitate too long, they run the risk of missing the opportunity altogether. Already Germania at bay is trembling with indescribable terror at the sound of the approaching hoofbeats of the Russian cavalry. It is obvious that the nations that lend a hand only when the resplendent dawn of victory is already visible, will by no means be entitled to the reward which they can still obtain if they make haste,' etc. Just as in the theatre they say, 'The last remaining seats will be snapped up very quickly; therefore it is well to act promptly.' This line of reasoning is all the more stupid since Norpois repeats it every six months and says periodically to Rumania, 'The hour has come for Rumania to make up her mind whether or not she wishes to realise her national aspirations. If she delays any longer, she may find that it is too late.' Now, in the two years that he has been saying this, the 'too late' has never come, but they are steadily increasing the reward offered to Rumania. In like manner he invites France, etc., to intervene against Greece, in her capacity of protecting power, on the ground that the treaty binding Greece to Serbia has not been lived up to. Now, tell

me in all good faith, if France were not at war and anxious to obtain the cooperation or, at least, the neutrality of Greece, would it ever occur to her to intervene 'in her capacity of protecting power', and does not the moral indignation which stirs her blood when Greece fails to fulfil her obligations toward Serbia die down the moment it is a question of equally flagrant treaty violations by Italy and Rumania, which countries (and with good reason, I think, just as in the case of Greece) have not fulfilled their duties—neither so binding nor so extensive as people think—as allies of Germany? The fact is, people see everything through the eyes of their favourite newspaper—and how could they do otherwise when they have no personal knowledge of the persons or events involved? In the days of that case which aroused people's passions in such strange ways during a period from which it is now the fashion to say we are separated by centuries (for the war-philosophers have established the theory that all the ties that bound us to the past have been severed) I used to be shocked to see members of my family esteem very highly anti-clericals, ex-communards, whom their newspaper represented to be anti-Dreyfusards, while they denounced a general who was a Catholic and of a good family, but a revisionist. I am just as shocked now to see the entire French nation reviling Emperor Franz Josef, for whom they used to entertain the highest respect—and they had good reason to do so, let me tell you, for I have known him well and he calls me his cousin. Ah, I haven't written to him since the war began," he added, as if bravely confessing a fault which he knew very well nobody would blame him for. "Oh yes, I did, the first year, but only once. But I can't help it, that doesn't lessen my respect for him at all; only here I have many young relatives fighting in our army who, I know, would consider it very wrong that I should keep up regular correspondence with the head of a nation with which we are at war. So what could I do?" he asked, as if inviting my censure. "Let anyone blame me who wants to, I did not wish a letter signed 'Charlus'

to arrive in Vienna at this time. The principal criticism I have to make of the venerable sovereign is that a nobleman of his rank, head of one of the most ancient and illustrious houses in Europe, should have allowed himself to be led around by that little country squire—very intelligent, I admit, but, after all, merely a *parvenu*—namely, Wilhelm von Hohenzollern. That is not one of the least shocking anomalies of this war." And since M. de Charlus always descended to the most extraordinarily childish comments as soon as he resumed the aristocratic point of view—which, in the final analysis, dominated everything in his social philosophy—he told me, in the same tone as he would have spoken of the Marne or Verdun, that there were some important and very curious things that should not be omitted by anyone who might write the history of this war. "Thus, for example," he said, "everybody is so ignorant that no one has called attention to this striking fact, that the Grand Master of the Order of Malta, who is a pure-blooded Boche, nevertheless continues to live in Rome, where, in his capacity of Grand Master of our order, he enjoys the privilege of extraterritoriality. Now, that's interesting to know," he added, as if to say, "You see, you've not wasted your evening by running into me." I thanked him for this valuable information and he assumed the deprecatory air of someone who does not wish to be paid for his services. "What was I talking to you about? Oh yes, that people now hate Franz Josef, following the lead of their newspaper. In the case of King Constantine of Greece and the Czar of Bulgaria, the public has swung back and forth between hostility and friendliness, according as they were told that these sovereigns were going to side with the Entente or with what Norpois calls 'the Central Empires'. It's like when he keeps on repeating that 'Venizelos's hour is about to strike.' I have no doubt that M. Venizelos is a statesman of great ability, but how do we know that he is wanted as badly as that? They tell us that he wished Greece to carry out her agreement with Serbia, but first one would have to know

what that agreement was and whether it was more extensive than those that Italy and Rumania thought they could safely break. We are concerned about Greece executing her treaties and respecting her constitution in a way we certainly would not be if this were not to our interest. If there had been no war, do you think that the 'guaranteeing' powers would even have noticed the dissolution of the parliamentary bodies? I see that they are simply taking the props out from under the King of Greece one by one, so as to be able to throw him out or lock him up as soon as he no longer has an army to defend him. I said a moment ago that the public forms its opinion of the King of Greece and the Czar of the Bulgarians only according to the newspapers. But how could they have any idea of them except through the newspapers, since they do not know the gentlemen? Now I, on the contrary, have seen a great deal of them; I knew Constantine of Greece well when he was the heir apparent, and a marvellously beautiful lad he was. I have always thought that Emperor Nicholas had a great weakness for him—of a perfectly respectable character, of course, although Princess Christian used to talk about this quite openly, but then, she is an evil-tongued vixen. As for the Bulgarian Czar, he's a shrewd hussy, a regular wench, but very intelligent—altogether a remarkable man. He is very fond of me."

M. de Charlus could be delightful company, but he was detestable when he got on this kind of subject. He brought to it that self-satisfaction which is so irritating in a sick person who boasts of his good health. I have often thought that "the faithful" who, on the narrow-gauge railway of Balbec, were so eager to obtain the admissions he avoided making, would not have been able to endure this way of displaying his monomania, and that, ill at ease and breathing heavily, as in a sick-room or in the presence of a morphine-addict who takes out his syringe before your eyes, they would themselves have halted the very confidences they thought they would so much like to hear. Besides, people were

tired of hearing everybody accused—and probably very often without any kind of proof—by a man who left himself out of the special category in which he was so pleased to put others and where everybody knew he himself belonged. Finally, intelligent though he was, he had built up for himself in this regard a narrow little philosophy (at the base of which there was, perhaps, a suggestion of the curiosities that Swann found in "life") which explained everything by these special causes and in which, as always when one gives way to his own particular weakness, M. de Charlus was not only unworthy of himself, but peculiarly satisfied with himself. That is why he, so serious and dignified, would end a remark like the following with the most idiotic simper: "Since there are strong presumptions regarding Emperor William similar to those concerning Ferdinand of Coburg, that might well be the reason why Czar Ferdinand has lined up on the side of the 'predatory empires'. After all, at bottom, it's easy to understand; one is indulgent with a *sister* and doesn't refuse her anything. I think that that would be a very pretty explanation of the alliance of Bulgaria with Germany." And M. de Charlus laughed long over this stupid explanation, as if he really thought it very ingenious, whereas, even if it had been based on facts, it was as childish as the observations on the war which he made as a feudalist or in his capacity of Knight of Saint John of Jerusalem. He ended, however, with a very true comment: "The surprising thing is that this public which judges men and war questions only through its newspapers is convinced that it is doing its own thinking." In that he was right. I have been told that it was edifying to see Mme. de Forcheville hesitate a moment in silence (as one is obliged to do before expressing or even formulating a personal opinion) and then announce, with the air of an intimate confidence, "No, I do not think they will capture Warsaw", "It does not seem to me they can hold out through a second winter", "The one thing I do not want is an inconclusive peace", "What I am uneasy about, if

you want to know, is the Chamber of Deputies", "On the contrary, it is my opinion that they might break through." And, in saying that, Odette would assume a mincing air, which she carried to the extreme when she said, "I don't say the German armies do not fight well, but they lack 'grit'." In saying "grit" (and even merely "keen fighting edge") she made a gesture with her hand as if she were kneading dough and squinted her eyes the way young art students do when they employ a studio idiom. Her own way of speaking, however, shewed even more plainly than before her admiration for the English, whom she no longer had to be satisfied, as formerly, to call "our neighbours from across the Channel" or, at best, "our friends the English," but now "our loyal allies!" Needless to say, she did not fail to use the expression "fair play" in every possible connexion, to shew the English discovering the Germans to be unsportsmanlike, and also, "The one thing needed is to win the war, as our allies say." Worst of all, she would drag in her son-in-law's name rather clumsily in connexion with everything having to do with the English and tell how much he was enjoying living on intimate terms with the Australians, as well as the Scottish, the New Zealanders and the Canadians. "My son-in-law, Saint-Loup, now knows the slang of all the brave 'Tommies'; he can make himself understood by men from the most distant 'dominions' and fraternises with the humblest private as well as with the general in command of the base."

This digression about Mme. de Forcheville gives me an excuse (while I walk along the boulevards side by side with M. de Charlus) to introduce another, even longer but useful in describing this period, concerning the relations between Mme. Verdurin and Brichot. The fact is, if poor Brichot was, like Norpois, judged mercilessly by M. de Charlus (because the latter was very keen and also more or less unconsciously a Germanophile) he was still more harshly treated by the Verdurins. It is true, they were rabidly patriotic and this should have made them take pleasure in

Brichot's articles, which, be it said, were by no means inferior to many writings that Mme. Verdurin delighted in. But in the first place, the reader will perhaps recall that already at La Raspelière, Brichot, whom the Verdurins had previously regarded as a great man, had become for them, if not a general butt of ridicule like Saniette, at any rate the object of their poorly disguised derision. Nevertheless, he was still at that time a "faithful" among "the faithful" and this assured him a share in the advantages guaranteed by the by-laws to all the charter members of the "little group." But as, little by little—perhaps under the influence of the war conditions or maybe through the rapid crystallising of a long retarded elegance, all the necessary but hitherto invisible elements of which had for a long time been permeating the Verdurins' salon—the latter had opened its doors to a new set of visitors and "the faithful," at first decoys for this new set, finally came to be invited less and less often, a parallel change took place in the case of Brichot. Notwithstanding the Sorbonne and the Institute, until the war broke out, his fame had never gone beyond the walls of the Verdurins' salon. But when he took to writing almost every day articles dressed up in the false brilliance that we have so often seen him dispensing with a lavish hand for the benefit of "the faithful"—articles rich, moreover, in very genuine erudition, which, like a true Sorbonne professor, he made no effort to conceal, whatever the humorous forms in which he cloaked it—the "upper crust" was literally dazzled. For once, be it said, it gave its approval to someone who was far from being a nonentity and who could hold the attention by his fecund intelligence and his well stocked memory. And while three duchesses went to spend the evening at Mme. Verdurin's, three others vied with one another for the honour of having the great man at their dinner table. And M. Brichot felt himself all the more at liberty to accept, since Mme. Verdurin, infuriated over the success his articles were meeting with in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, took care never to have Brichot at her house

when there was to be present some brilliant person whom he had not yet met and who would hasten to try to draw him away. It was thus that journalism, in which Brichot, somewhat late in life, was satisfied to expend, with honour to himself and in return for a princely remuneration, what he had been squandering all his life, gratis and incognito, in the Verdurins' salon (for he had such a fund of knowledge and such an easy flow of words that his writing cost him scarcely any more effort than his conversation) would have led—and seemed at one time to be leading—Brichot to a position of undisputed glory—had it not been for Mme. Verdurin. It is true, Brichot's articles were far from being as remarkable as society people thought. The lack of refinement of the man shewed continually through the pedantry of the scholar. And alongside utterly meaningless figures of speech ("The Germans will never again be able to look Beethoven's statue in the face", "Schiller must have shuddered in his tomb", "The ink that had subscribed to the neutrality of Belgium was scarcely dry", "Lenin is whistling down the wind from off the steppes") there were cheap trivialities like "Twenty thousand prisoners—that's some figure!" "Our general staff will know how to keep its weather eye open", "We are determined to win and that's all there is to it." But along with all that, so much knowledge, such intelligence, such sound reasoning! Mme. Verdurin never began one of Brichot's articles without getting an anticipatory pleasure out of thinking of the absurd things she was going to find in it and she would read it with the closest attention in order to be sure not to let any of them escape her. Now, it was unfortunately certain that there would be some absurdities. But folk did not wait to find them. The most felicitous quotation from an author really little known—at any rate, through the book M. Brichot was discussing—was pounced upon as an evidence of the most intolerable pedantry, and Mme. Verdurin would impatiently await the dinner hour in order to set off her guests in peals of laughter. "Well, what did you think of Brichot this eve-

ning? I thought of you as I read the quotation from Cuvier. Upon my word, I think the man is losing his mind." "I haven't read the article yet," said one of "the faithful." "What! you haven't read it yet! You have no idea of the joy you are depriving yourself of. It is absurd enough to make one die of laughter." And, secretly glad someone had not read the Brichot article, which gave her an opportunity to shew up its ridiculous passages, Mme. Verdurin would tell the butler to bring *Le Temps* and she would herself read the article aloud, giving a bombastic sonority to even the simplest sentences. After dinner, this anti-Brichot campaign would go on for the whole evening, but with insincere reservations. "I am not speaking very loud because I am afraid that over there," she would say, pointing to the Comtesse de Molé, "there is someone who admires him a lot. Society folk are more naïve than people think." Mme. Molé, to whom they sought, by speaking rather loud, to convey the idea that they were talking about her, while at the same time, by lowering their voices, they tried to give the impression that they would not have liked her to hear them, cowardly repudiated Brichot, whom she really considered the equal of Michelet. She expressed agreement with Mme. Verdurin but, to end up with something that seemed to her undeniable, she added, "But there's one thing you've got to admit and that is that it's well written." "You call that well written?" exclaimed Mme. Verdurin. "For my part, I think it reads as if it had been written by a *cochon*"—a daring remark that made those elegant folk laugh, especially since Mme. Verdurin, startled a bit herself at the word *cochon,* had whispered it, holding her hand before her lips. Her anger against Brichot was increased by the latter's naïve way of displaying the satisfaction he felt over his success, notwithstanding occasional fits of ill humour when the censor—as he expressed it, with his habit of employing colloquial terms, just to shew that he was not too much the college professor—"blue-pencilled" part of one of his articles. In his presence Mme. Verdurin did not, except by a certain churlishness which would have en-

lightened a more discerning man, shew too clearly how little she thought of his writings. Just once she criticised him for using "I" so often. For he did, it is true, have a way of using it all the time, in the first place, because, as a professor, he was accustomed to employing constantly expressions such as "I grant that", "I will admit that the tremendous extension of the military fronts requires", etc., but more particularly because, as a former militant anti-Dreyfusard who had instinctively sensed the Germanic military preparation long before the war, he found himself writing very often, "I have been exposing ever since 1897", "I called attention in 1901 to", "I warned in my little pamphlet which is to-day out of print and very hard to obtain (*habent sua fata libelli*)"; and then the habit had stuck to him. He blushed deeply at Mme. Verdurin's remark, which was made in a cutting tone. "You are quite right, Madame," he replied. "Even a man who loved the Jesuits as little as did M. Combes—though he could not hold a candle to our gentle master of delightful scepticism, Anatole France, who, if I am not mistaken, was my opponent . . . before 'the Deluge'—has very well said that the 'I' is always odious." From that time on, Brichot dropped "I" and used a passive construction instead, but this did not prevent the reader from understanding that the writer was referring to himself and it made it possible for the writer now to speak of himself all the time, to comment on even the most insignificant of his own statements, to construct an entire article on a single negation—all under the wing of the passive form of the verb! For instance, if Brichot had said, even in another article, that the German armies had lost some of their courage, he would begin in this manner: "The truth is not camouflaged in these columns. It has been said here that the German armies have lost some of their courage. It was not said that they do not still possess great courage. Still less will it be said that they no longer have any courage at all. Nor will it be said that the ground gained, even if it be not," etc. In short, simply by announcing all that he would not say and

recalling all that he had said a few years before and all that Clausewitz, Ovid, Apollonius of Tyana had said so-and-so many centuries ago, he could easily have made up enough material for a large volume, and it is to be regretted that he did not publish his writings in book form, for these articles, so crammed with erudition, are now hard to procure. Coached by Mme. Verdurin, the Faubourg Saint-Germain at first laughed at Brichot in her salon, while continuing to admire him, once they were outside the "little clan." Then, just as it had formerly been the fashion to admire him, it became the style to poke fun at him, and even the ladies who secretly continued to find his articles interesting, as they had from the beginning, stopped and laughed when anyone came in, in order not to seem less intelligent than the others. Brichot had never been discussed so much in the "little clan" as at this period, but now in derision. They adopted as a criterion of the intelligence of each newcomer what he thought of Brichot's articles; if he did not answer correctly the first time, they did not fail to instruct him as to how it is recognised whether people are intelligent or not.

"In short, my dear friend," M. de Charlus went on, "it is all very terrible and we have other things besides tiresome articles to weep over. They talk about vandalism and about statues destroyed. But is it not also vandalism to destroy so many marvellous young men, who were like just so many incomparably beautiful statues of different shades and colours? Will not a city which contains no more handsome men be like one whose statuary has been demolished? What pleasure can I take in going to dine at the restaurant when I am waited on by moss-covered old clowns who look like Father Didon, or else by women in little caps who make me think I have stepped into a quick-lunch place? That's the truth, my friend, and I think I have a right to talk in this way because the beautiful is just as truly beautiful even when done in living materials. What a pleasure to be waited on by men with rickets and eyeglasses whose reason for getting exempted can be seen on their faces! Contrary to what al-

ways used to be the case, if you want to feast your eyes on a handsome person in the restaurant, you must not look for him among the waiters, but among those they are waiting on. One used to be able to go and have another look at an employee, although they changed very frequently, but that English lieutenant over there who has come here for the first time and may be killed to-morrow, just try to find out who he is and when he will come here again! When Augustus of Poland, as Morand, the delightful author of *Clarissa,* relates, traded one of his regiments for a collection of Chinese pottery, he made a very poor bargain, in my opinion. Just think, those tall footmen, over six feet in height, who used to adorn the monumental staircases of our most charming friends, have all been killed, having enlisted, most of them, because people kept telling them the war would last only two months. Ah, they did not know, as I do, the might of Germany, the valour of the Prussian race!" he exclaimed, forgetting himself. And then, realising that he had shewn his own point of view too clearly, he added, "What I fear for France's sake is not so much Germany as the war itself. The people here at home imagine that the war is a gigantic prize fight which they are witnessing from a distance, through the kindness of the newspapers. But there is no resemblance between the two. War is like a disease which, when you seem to have checked it at one point, breaks out at another. To-day Noyon will be relieved, to-morrow there will be no more bread or chocolate, and the day after to-morrow he who thought himself safe and who would, if necessary, accept philosophically a wound the consequences of which he does not picture to himself, will be in a panic when he reads in the newspaper that his class has been called back into service. As for historic buildings, the disappearance of a work of art unique in its beauty, like the Cathedral of Rheims, does not fill me with such dismay as the wiping out of so many combined effects which used to make even the tiniest village in France charming and instructive." (I immediately thought of Combray and how formerly I would have

feared to lower myself in the eyes of Mme. de Guermantes if I had owned up to the modest position which my family occupied there. I wondered if it had, perhaps, been revealed to the Guermantes and M. de Charlus by either Legrandin or Swann or Saint-Loup or Morel. But even being passed over in this manner was less painful to me than retrospective explanations would have been. All I hoped for was that M. de Charlus would not speak of Combray.) "I don't wish to say anything against the Americans, my dear sir," he continued. "Their generosity is said to be inexhaustible and, since there has been no orchestra leader in this war and each country has joined the dance a long time after the others and since the Americans began when we were nearly done for, they may well shew a zeal that four years of fighting have possibly cooled off in us. Even before the war, they liked our country and our art and bought our masterpieces at very high prices. There are many of these works of art in their country to-day. But it just happens that this uprooted art, as M. Barrès would say, produces quite the opposite effect to that which used to constitute the delightful charm of France. The castle explained the church, which, in its turn, as it had been a place of pilgrimage, explained the *chanson de geste.* It is not for me to overrate the illustriousness of my ancestry and my family connexions, and besides, that is not what we are discussing at present. But not long ago, having a business matter to settle, in spite of a certain coldness that now exists between the young couple and me, I had to call on my niece, Mme. de Saint-Loup, who lives at Combray. Combray was merely a very small town like so many others. But our ancestors were represented there as patrons on some of the stained-glass windows and our coat-of-arms was reproduced on others. We had our family chapel there and our ancestral tombs. This church has been destroyed by the French and the English because it was being used as a lookout by the Germans. All that composite of living history and art which constituted France is being destroyed and the end is not yet. And of course I'm not so

ridiculous as to compare for family reasons the destruction of the church of Combray with that of the Cathedral of Amiens, or that of Rheims, which was like a Gothic cathedral that had in some miraculous way recaptured the purity of classic sculpture. I do not know whether the upraised arm of Saint Firmin has been broken off. If it has, then the noblest affirmation of faith and energy has disappeared from the earth." "Only its symbol, my dear sir," I replied. "I adore certain symbols as much as you. But it would be absurd for the sake of the symbol to sacrifice the reality it represents. It is all right to have reverence for cathedrals until a day comes when, in order to save them, one would have to be false to the truths they teach us. The arm of Saint Firmin, raised in a gesture of almost military command, seemed to say, 'Let us be broken if honour requires it.' Do not sacrifice men to stones, whose beauty comes precisely from their having for a moment caught and held human truths." "I understand what you mean," M. de Charlus responded, "and M. Barrès, who has, alas, made us perform too many pilgrimages to the statue of Strasburg and the tomb of M. Déroulède, was touching and gracious when he wrote that even the Cathedral of Rheims was less precious to us than the lives of our soldiers—a declaration that makes rather ridiculous the wrath of our newspapers against the German general in command there, who said that the Cathedral of Rheims was of less value to him than the life of a single German soldier. That is just what is so exasperating and so distressing—each country says the same thing. The reasons for which the industrial associations of Germany declare the possession of Belfort to be indispensable for protecting their country against our ideas of *revanche* are the same as those of Barrès insisting on Mayence in order to protect us against any notions of invasion the Boches might have. Why did the recovering of Alsace-Lorraine seem to France an insufficient reason for going to war and a sufficient one for continuing it and for making a fresh declaration of war each year? You appear to believe that victory is now

assured to France; I hope so with all my heart; you have no doubt about it; but after all, since the Allies, rightly or wrongly, feel sure of winning (for my part, I would naturally be delighted with this solution, but I see chiefly many paper victories and Pyrrhic victories at a cost they don't let us know) and the Boches no longer feel sure of winning, we see Germany endeavouring to hasten the peace and France prolonging the war—'la France juste,' which has a right to utter words of stern justice, but also 'la douce France,' which has a duty to utter words of pity, if only for the sake of her children and so that the flowers that blossom anew every spring may brighten something else than a land of graves. Be frank, my dear friend; you yourself expounded to me a theory about the things that exist only thanks to a perpetually renewed creation. 'The creation of the world did not happen once for all,' you said to me, 'it is going on necessarily every day.' Very well, if you are sincere, you cannot exempt war from this theory. It is of no use for our good friend Norpois—trotting out one of those rhetorical devices so dear to him, such as, 'the dawn of victory' and 'General Winter'—to write, 'Now that Germany has insisted on war, the die is cast'; the real truth is that each morning war is declared all over again. Therefore, the one who wants to keep it up is as guilty as the one who began it—possibly more so, for perhaps the latter did not foresee all its horrors. Now, there is nothing to assure us that a war which lasts so long, even if it should have a victorious outcome, is entirely without its dangers. It is difficult to discuss intelligently things that have no precedent or talk about the after-effects of an operation that is being tried for the first time. Generally, it is true, these innovations that cause so much alarm turn out very well. The most long-headed republicans thought it was madness to bring about the separation of Church and State. It went through as smoothly as a letter through the mails. Dreyfus has been rehabilitated and Picquard has been Minister of War without anybody saying 'boo.' And yet what may one not fear

from an excessive strain like that of a war of several years' uninterrupted duration? What will the men do when they come back? Will they be worn out? Will they be broken with fatigue or beside themselves with anger? Such a situation might take a very bad turn, if not for the country, at least for the government, perhaps even for our form of government. Long ago you had me read the admirable *Aimée de Coigny,* by Maurras. I should be greatly surprised if some Aimée de Coigny were not awaiting from the development of the war now being waged by the Republic what in 1812 Aimée de Coigny awaited from the war waged by the Empire. If the present-day Aimée exists, will her hopes be realised? I trust not. But, to return to the war itself, 'the one who began it'—was it Emperor William? I doubt it very much. And, even if it was he, what did he do different from what, for example, Napoleon did—something which I myself consider abominable, but still I am astonished to see it horrify so greatly men who swing the incense-burner before the Tomb of Napoleon or who cried out, with General X, the day war was declared, 'This is the greatest day of my life; I have been waiting forty years for it!' God knows if anyone protested more vigorously than I at the disproportionate place in society given to nationalists and military men—and that, too, at a time when every friend of the arts was accused of spending his time on things harmful to the fatherland and every civilisation that was not belligerent was considered pernicious. Why, a really well bred gentleman scarcely counted alongside a general. One fool of a woman almost introduced me to M. Syveton! You may say that what I was trying to maintain were merely rules of etiquette; but, notwithstanding their apparent triviality, perhaps they would have prevented many outrages. I have always honoured the men who defend grammar or logic. Fifty years afterwards, we realise that they warded off great perils. Our nationalists are the greatest Hun-haters and die-hards in the world, but in the last fifteen years their philosophy has changed completely. In reality they are working hard

to prolong the war, but it is only to 'wipe out a too belligerent race' and 'through love of peace'. For a warlike civilisation, something they considered so fine fifteen years ago, now fills them with horror; not only do they blame Prussia for having allowed the military element to get control, but they believe that militarist civilisations have at all times been destructive of all that they now hold precious, not only the arts, but even polite society. It is enough that one of their former critics turn convert to nationalism for him to become by the same stroke an advocate of peace. He is convinced, for example, that, in all warlike civilisations, woman has occupied an abject and degraded position. One does not dare to remind him that the 'fair ladies' of the medieval knights and Dante's Beatrice were placed on thrones perhaps quite as lofty as M. Becque's heroines. I fully expect one of these days to find myself seated at table below a Russian revolutionist or even below one of our generals who are now carrying on war because of their horror of war and in order to punish a people for cultivating an ideal which they themselves, fifteen years ago, esteemed to be the only invigorating one. Only a few months ago the poor Czar was being praised for having called together the Hague Peace Conference. But now that they hail liberated Russia, they forget the thing for which they used to glorify her. So turns the wheel of the world! And yet Germany uses so exactly the same expressions as France that it would almost make you think she was quoting verbatim. She does not tire of declaring that she is 'fighting for her very existence.' When I read, 'We shall continue to struggle against our cruel and implacable enemy until we have secured a peace that shall guarantee us against aggression for all time to come and in order that the blood of our brave soldiers shall not have been shed in vain,' or 'He who is not for us is against us,' I do not know whether the remark comes from Emperor William or M. Poincaré, for each of them has used it, with slight variations, a score of times—although, to be frank, I have to admit that, in this instance, the Emperor is

imitating the President of the Republic. Perhaps France would not have been so anxious to prolong the war if she had continued to be the weaker party; but even more probably, Germany would not have been so eager to end it if she had not ceased to be the stronger. Not that she is not still strong, as you shall see." M. de Charlus had formed the habit of talking very loud, partly through nervousness and partly because he sought an outlet for impressions which, never having cultivated any of the arts, he had to relieve himself of as an aviator gets rid of his bombs, even if it were out in the open fields, where his words reached nobody's ears—and particularly out in society, where his remarks fell at random and where people listened to him, some through desire to curry favour, some through confidence in him and others, one can say, through force and fear, such was his way of tyrannising over his hearers. On the boulevards, this habit of orating was also a mark of contempt for the passers-by, on whose account he would no more have lowered his voice than he would swerve an inch out of his path. But it sounded very much out of place there and attracted attention and, when people turned around, they caught remarks which might have caused us to be taken for defeatists. I called M. de Charlus's attention to this but only succeeded in exciting his laughter. "Admit that that would be very funny," he said. "After all," he added, "one never can tell; every one of us runs the risk each evening of becoming the subject of the outstanding item of local news in the papers the next morning. And after all, why should I not be shot in the *fossés de Vincennes?* The same thing happened to my great-uncle, the Duc d'Enghien. The thirst for noble blood turns the head of a certain element of the populace, which, however, in that respect shews itself more fastidious than the lions; you know that, for those beasts to throw themselves on Mme. Verdurin, it would be enough that she have a slight scratch on the nose—on what, in my youth, we would have called her 'beak'." And he burst out laughing as if we had been alone in some salon. From time to time,

seeing some suspicious-looking individuals come forward out of the dark corners as M. de Charlus went by and fall in with one another a short distance behind him, I wondered whether it would be more agreeable to him that I leave him alone or that I stay by him. In the same way, if you meet an old man who is subject to frequent fits of an epileptic nature and you notice by his unsteady walk that an attack is probably coming on, you wonder whether he wants your assistance as a good Samaritan more than he dreads your presence as a witness of the malady which he would like to conceal but which the very fact of your being present may bring on the sooner, whereas he might have kept it off if he had been quite alone. In the case of the sick man, the imminence of the incident which you are uncertain whether to avoid or not is indicated by his circuitous walk, like that of a drunken man, whereas in M. de Charlus's case, by an ingenious arrangement, the various different positions that indicated the possibility of an incident which I was not sure whether or not he wished me to head off by my presence, were assumed, not by the Baron, who walked straight on, but by a whole group of actors in the background. All the same, I believe that he wished to avoid the meeting, for he led me hurriedly down a side street, darker than the boulevard, into which the latter poured a continuous stream of soldiers of every arm and every nationality, an inflow of young men that consoled and compensated M. de Charlus for the frenzied draining of men to the frontier which had made such a void in Paris during the first days of mobilisation. M. de Charlus never ceased admiring the brilliant uniforms that passed before us, making Paris as cosmopolitan as a seaport and as unreal as a background of a painting where the artist has thrown together a few bits of architecture merely as a pretext for grouping the most varied and dazzling costumes. He kept all his respect and affection for certain ladies of aristocratic rank who were accused of defeatism, just as formerly he had done for some who were accused of Dreyfusism. He regretted only that, by lowering

themselves to take part in politics, they had given an opening for the attacks of journalists. In his eyes, as far as they were concerned, everything was the same as ever. For his superficial way of looking at things was so consistently applied that for him birth combined with beauty and other social advantages was the one permanent thing, and the war and the Dreyfus case were vulgar and ephemeral fashions. If the Duchesse de Guermantes had been shot for trying to bring about a separate peace with Austria, he would always have considered her no less noble and no more disgraced than Marie Antoinette seems to us to-day for having been condemned to be beheaded. As he talked with me at that moment, M. de Charlus stood there, noble as a sort of Saint Vallier or Saint Mégrin, erect, unbending, dignified; he spoke seriously and for the moment did not have any of the mannerisms by which men of his peculiar type betray themselves. And yet why cannot a single one of them have a voice that is absolutely true? Even when it was most serious, his rang false and in need of tuning. Besides, he literally did not know which way to turn and frequently raised his eyes to the sky, expressing regret that he did not have field-glasses, although they would not have been of much use to him because, on account of the Zeppelin raid two days before, which had aroused the vigilance of the authorities, there were soldiers everywhere, even in the sky. The airplanes that I had seen a few hours before, looking like little brown insects against the blue twilight, were now disappearing like glowing firebrands into the night, made still blacker by the extinction of many of the street lights. The greatest impression of beauty which we got from those human shooting stars came, perhaps, more especially from their making us gaze at the sky, which people usually look at so seldom in that Paris whose beauty I had seen in 1914 awaiting, almost defenceless, the menace of the approaching enemy. Now, as then, there was, to be sure, the changeless ancient splendour of a moon, cruelly and mysteriously serene, pouring over the historic buildings, still intact, the useless beauty of

her light; but, as in 1914 and to an even greater degree, there was something else besides, various beams of light and intermittent flashes which, whether they came from those airplanes or from the Eiffel Tower, one knew to be directed by intelligent will-power, by a friendly vigilance that filled us with the same sort of emotion and inspired in us the same kind of gratitude and peace of mind as I had felt in Saint-Loup's room, in the cell of that military monastery where so many fervent, disciplined hearts were being trained for the day when, in the flower of their youth, they should unhesitatingly make the supreme sacrifice.

After the raid of two days before, the sky, which had been more in turmoil than the earth, had become calm again, like the sea after a storm, but, like the sea after a storm, not completely so. Airplanes still shot up like flaming rockets to join the stars, and searchlights slowly moved their beams, like wandering milky ways of pale star-dust, back and forth across the sectioned-off heavens. Meanwhile the airplanes slipped in among the constellations and, seeing these "new stars," one would have thought himself in another hemisphere. M. de Charlus expressed to me his admiration for those aviators and, since he could not prevent himself from giving free rein to his German sympathies any more than to his other inclinations, while at the same time disavowing them all, he continued, "Let me add, by the way, that I admire quite as much the Germans who go up in the Gothas. And in the Zeppelins, just think what courage that takes! I tell you, they are simply heroic! What if they do drop their bombs on civilians—don't those batteries fire at them? Are you afraid of Gothas and cannon?" I avowed I was not and perhaps I was mistaken. My indolence having given me the habit of putting off my work from day to day, doubtless I figured to myself that it might be the same way with death. How can you be afraid of a cannon which you are convinced is not going to hit you that day? Moreover, when formulated one by one, these ideas of bombs hurled and of possible death added nothing to the tragic picture I

imagined of the coming of the German air machines, until one evening I saw one of them, tossed about and partly cut off from my sight by billows of mist in the stormy sky—an airplane which, though I knew its murderous mission, seemed to my imagination a celestial, star-like thing—actually hurl a bomb toward us. For the essential reality of a danger is perceived only through that thing, new and impossible to reduce to what we already know, which is called an impression and which is often summed up in a single line, as it was in that case, a line that disclosed a purpose, a line in which there was the potentiality of a deed which deformed it—while, as I stood on the Pont de la Concorde, up there around the threatening airplane, now at bay (as though the fountains of the Champs-Élysées, the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries were reflected on the clouds) the luminous streams from the searchlights were directed skyward in lines which likewise had their purpose, a foreseeing and protecting purpose, directed by wise and able men, to whom, as that night in the quarters at Doncières, I was grateful for deigning to use their might to stand guard over us with such beautiful precision.

The night was as fine as in 1914 and Paris was threatened in the same manner. The moonlight seemed like a soft, continuous flash-light that made it possible for the last time to take night pictures of such beautiful panoramas as the Place Vendôme and the Place de la Concorde, which, through my fear lest the shells destroy them, acquired by contrast, in their beauty still intact, a sort of rich fullness, as though they were reaching forward, offering their defenceless architecture to the enemy's blows. "You are not afraid?" repeated M. de Charlus. "The Parisians do not grasp the situation. I am told that Mme. Verdurin is holding receptions daily. I know it only by hearsay, for I know nothing about them myself, having broken with them entirely," he added, lowering not only his glance, as if he had seen a telegrapher go by, but also his head and shoulders, and raising his arms in the gesture which signifies, if not, "I wash my hands of it," at

least, "I can't tell you anything about it" (although I was not asking him anything). "I know that Morel goes there a great deal," he continued. (It was the first time he had revived this subject with me.) "They claim he is very sorry about the past and would like to make up with me," he added, displaying the credulity both of the man of the Faubourg who says, "I hear that France is in communication with Germany more actively than ever and that they have even started negotiations," and of the suitor who has not been convinced even by the cruellest rebuffs. "Anyhow, if he wishes it, he has only to say so; I am older than he and it is not for me to take the first steps." And certainly this was so obvious, it was unnecessary to say it. But, more than that, it was not even sincere and that was why one felt so embarrassed with M. de Charlus, because one felt that, even in saying that it was not for him to take the first steps, he was doing precisely that and was waiting for me to offer to undertake to bring them together again. I knew well, indeed, that naïve or pretended credulity of people who are in love with someone—or simply are not invited by someone—and who attribute to that other person a desire that he has not manifested, notwithstanding wearisome solicitation.

Unfortunately, the very next day, let me say here, M. de Charlus ran into Morel suddenly in the street. The latter, in order to arouse the older man's jealousy, took him by the arm and told him some stories that were more or less true and, when M. de Charlus, beside himself, needing to have Morel stay with him that evening, begged him not to go anywhere else, Morel, catching sight of a friend, bade the Baron farewell. M. de Charlus, angered and hoping that this threat (which, of course, it did not seem likely he would ever carry out) would make Morel stay, exclaimed, "Take care; I will have my revenge," but Morel went off with a laugh, patting his friend on the back and putting his arm around his waist, to the latter's great astonishment.

From the suddenly trembling voice with which M. de Charlus had scanned his words as he spoke of Morel, and

from the dark look that lurked deep in his eyes, I got the impression that there was more here than merely a commonplace insistence. I was not mistaken and I am going to relate at once the two incidents which afterwards proved it to me. (For the second of these incidents, I shall have to get far ahead of my story, as it happened after the death of M. de Charlus, which did not occur until much later, and we shall have occasion to meet him several times and find him a very different man from the one we have known, especially the last time, when he had completely forgotten Morel.) As for the first of these incidents, it occurred only two years after that evening when I walked down the boulevards with M. de Charlus in the way I have told. Well then, some two years after that evening, I met Morel. I immediately thought of M. de Charlus and of the pleasure it would give him to see the violinist again, and I urged him insistently to go to see him, even if only just once. "He was kind to you," I reminded Morel. "He is already an old man; he might die; you should settle your old quarrel and wipe out all traces of the disagreement." Morel seemed entirely of the same opinion as to the desirability of a reconciliation, but still he refused flatly to go to see M. de Charlus even once. "You are making a mistake," I said. "Is it obstinacy, indolence, meanness, false pride, virtue (I guarantee yours will not be attacked) or coyness?" Then the violinist, his face contracted with a confession that doubtless cost him dearly, replied with a shudder, "No, it's for none of those reasons. Virtue? What do I care about that? Meanness? On the contrary, I am beginning to feel sorry for him. It is not out of coyness; that would be useless. Nor because of indolence, for there are whole days when I sit twiddling my thumbs. No, it is not for any of those reasons. It is—but never tell anyone and I'm a fool to tell you—it's—it's—it's because I'm afraid!" He began to tremble in every limb. I confessed that I did not understand. "No, don't ask me. Let's not talk about it any more. You don't know him as I do; in fact, you don't know

him at all." "But what harm can he do you? On the contrary, he will be still less anxious to harm you because there will no longer be any hard feeling between you. And besides, at bottom you know he is very kind-hearted." "By gad, I certainly do know that he is kind-hearted! And he is refinement and uprightness personified. But leave me, please. Don't talk to me any more about it, I beg you. It is shameful to admit, but I'm afraid." The second incident dates from after the death of M. de Charlus. They brought me some little remembrances he had left me, also a letter in a triple envelope, written at least ten years before his death. He had been seriously ill at the time and had made all his arrangements, then he had recovered, only later to fall into the condition in which we shall find him on the day of an afternoon reception at the home of the Princesse de Guermantes. The letter, lying in a strong box with articles he was leaving to some of his friends, had remained there for seven years, seven years in which he had entirely forgotten Morel. The letter, written in a fine, firm handwriting, was as follows:

"My dear friend:

The ways of Providence are past finding out. Sometimes it makes use of the weakness of a mediocre person to save from disaster the supereminence of a just man. You know Morel, what he came from and to what lofty heights I planned to elevate him, in other words, to my own level. You know how he chose instead to return, not to the dust and ashes from which any man (that is to say, the true phœnix) may be born again, but to the slime where crawls the viper. He disgraced himself and thereby saved me from falling from grace. You know that my coat of arms contains the motto of Our Lord Himself, *Inculcabis super leonem et aspidem,* and represents a man who has under the soles of his feet, as heraldic supporters, a lion and a serpent. Now, if I have succeeded in trampling under foot, as I have done,

the lion that is in me, it is thanks to the serpent and his prudence, which is sometimes too lightly called a failing but which the profound wisdom of the Holy Gospel considers a virtue, at least in others. Our serpent, whose hissings used to be so harmoniously modulated when he had a charmer—himself under a spell, for that matter—not only was snake-like and musical, but carried to the point of cowardice that virtue which I now regard as divine, namely, prudence. It was this divine prudence which made him resist the appeals I made to him through others to come to see me again, and I shall not have any peace in this world or hope of pardon in the next unless I make this confession to you. In this matter he was the instrument of Divine Wisdom, for I had made up my mind that he should not leave my house alive. One or the other of us would have had to die. I was determined to kill him. God, to save me from a crime, counselled him prudence. I doubt not that the intercession of the Archangel Michael, my patron saint, played a great part therein, and I now pray to him to forgive me for having so neglected him these many years and for having so illy requited the boundless bounty he has bestowed upon me, most especially in my battle with sin. I owe it to this faithful protector—and I say this in the fullness of my faith and my intelligence—that the Heavenly Father inspired Morel not to come. And so it is I, instead, who am dying.

Your ever devoted *semper idem,*

P. G. Charlus"

Now I understood Morel's fear. There was, it is true, much boasting and literary affectation in this letter, but the confession was true, and Morel knew better than I that the "half-insane side" which Mme. de Guermantes claimed to see in her brother-in-law was not confined, as I had thought until then, to passing outbreaks of superficial and ineffectual anger.

But I must go back and pick up the thread. I am walking down the boulevards beside M. de Charlus, who has just chosen me as an informal intermediary for overtures of peace between him and Morel. Seeing that I did not reply, he continued, "By the way, I don't understand why he doesn't play his violin any more. There are no more concerts, it is true, on the ground that this is war-time, but there are dances, and people still go out to dinner. Parties fill what, if the Germans continue to advance, may be the last days of our Pompeii. Just let the lava from some German Vesuvius (their naval guns are quite as terrible as a volcano) catch them at their toilette and fix for all eternity the pose in which they are overtaken, and the children of the future will get their education in ancient history by looking at illustrations in their schoolbooks shewing Mme. de Molé about to apply a final layer of cosmetics before going to dine with a sister-in-law, or Sosthène de Guermantes putting the finishing touches on his false eyebrows; this will furnish lecture material for future Brichots; the frivolous life of an epoch after ten centuries have passed over it is worthy of the most scholarly research, especially if it has been kept intact by a volcanic eruption or by substances similar to lava, hurled in a bombardment. What documents for future historians, when asphyxiating gases, resembling those that Vesuvius vomited forth, and crumbling buildings like those that buried Pompeii shall preserve intact all the last reckless fair ones who have not yet dispatched their paintings and statuary to Bayonne! And anyhow, hasn't it been for the past year a sort of Pompeii in instalments every evening, with these folk hurrying down cellar, not to bring up some old bottle of Mouton Rothschild or Saint-Emilion, but to hide themselves and their most precious possessions, like the priests of Herculaneum, overtaken by death at the moment of carrying away the sacred vases. It is always attachment to some possession that causes the death of the possessor. Paris, it is true, was not founded by Hercules, as was Herculaneum. But how many resemblances force themselves on our atten-

tion! And this prophetic vision which is granted us is not peculiar to our age alone; each age has had it. If I believe that to-morrow we may meet the fate of the cities around Vesuvius, the latter felt that they were menaced with the same destiny as the accursed cities of the Bible. They have found on the walls of one of the houses of Pompeii this significant inscription: *Sodoma, Gomora.*" I do not know whether it was this name Sodom and the thoughts it suggested to him, or the idea of the bombardment, which caused M. de Charlus to raise his eyes to heaven for an instant, but he quickly brought them back to earth. "I admire all the heroes of this war," he went on. "Take, for instance, the English soldiers, whom I regarded a bit lightly at the beginning of the war as mere football players who were rather presumptuous to match themselves against professionals—and what professionals!—well, from the æsthetic point of view alone, they are like athletes of ancient Greece—yes, I mean Greece—young men of Plato's time, or Spartans, to be more exact. I have a friend who went to Rouen, where they have their camp. He saw some marvels of beauty, marvels you have no idea of. It is no longer Rouen; it is a different city. Naturally, there is also old Rouen, with the emaciated saints of its cathedral, and of course it is also very fine, but it's not the same thing. And our *poilus!* I can't tell you what a delight I take in them, in the young fellows from Paris—there, like that one going by, with his sophisticated, wide-awake air and his roguish expression. I often stop them and have a little chat with them. What shrewdness and common sense! And the lads from the country, how cute and amusing they are, with their rolling of the *r* and their backwoods jargon! You see, I have lived a great deal in the country, slept in farmhouses; I know their language. But our admiration for the French should not lead us to underestimate our enemies; that would be lowering our own value also. You don't know what a fine soldier the German is; you have not seen him, as I have, march past at *Paradeschritt,* the goose-step, *unter den Linden.*" Com-

ing back to the ideal of virility which he had outlined to me at Balbec and which had come to assume a philosophical form in his mind, and employing absurd arguments which at times, even when he had just been very fine, shewed the too thin veneer of the mere man of the world, however intelligent, he continued, "You see, that superb, stalwart fellow, the German soldier, is a strong, healthy creature, who thinks of nothing but the greatness of his country, *Deutschland über Alles*—which is not so stupid after all, and while they are preparing themselves in virile fashion, we have ruined ourselves with dilettantism." This word probably signified to M. de Charlus something akin to literature, for, doubtless recalling immediately that I was fond of that subject and at one time had intended to devote myself to it, he slapped me on the shoulder (taking advantage of this gesture to give me such a blow that it hurt as much as the recoil of the "75" against my shoulder used to when I was doing my military service) and said, as if to soften the criticism, "Yes, we have ruined ourselves with dilettantism, all of us; you, too, you can say your *mea culpa,* the same as I, for we have all been too dilettante." From surprise at the criticism, slowness in repartee, a feeling of deference toward my companion and appreciation of his friendly kindliness, I replied as if I, too, ought to beat my breast, as he invited me to do, which was perfectly absurd, as I had not the slightest shadow of dilettantism to reproach myself with. "Well, I'm going to leave you now," he said (the group that had been trailing him at a distance having given us up at last). "I am going home to bed, like an old gentleman, especially since it appears that the war has changed all our habits, to quote one of the platitudes Norpois is so fond of." But I knew that, even when he got home, M. de Charlus would still be surrounded by soldiers, for he had transformed his apartment into a military hospital—in doing which, by the way, I think he was yielding less to the needs of his imagination than to his kindness of heart.

It was a transparently clear night, without a breath of

air stirring. I imagined that the Seine, flowing through the hoops formed by the bridges and the reflexion of their arches in the water, must resemble the Bosphorus. And as a symbol either of the invasion prophesied by M. de Charlus's defeatism, or of the cooperation of our Mussulman brothers with the armies of France, the slender, curved moon, recalling a sequin, seemed to place the Parisian sky under the Oriental sign of the crescent. For an instant M. de Charlus stood motionlessly looking at a Senegalese soldier, as he said good-bye to me, crushing my hand in his strong grip, a German habit, peculiar to people of the Baron's sort, and continuing for some time to "manipulate" it (as Cottard would have said) as if he wanted to restore to my joints a suppleness they had never lost. With some blind people, the sense of touch takes the place of sight to a certain extent, but I have no idea which of the senses it was taking the place of in this case. Perhaps he thought he was merely shaking hands with me, the same as no doubt he thought he had simply glanced at the Senegalese, who had passed on into the darkness without deigning to notice that he was being admired. But in both respects the Baron was mistaken; he overdid both the pressure and the glances. "How all the Orient of Decamps, Fromentin, Ingres and Delacroix is summed up there!" he said, still entranced by the fleeting glimpse of the Senegalese soldier. "As you know, I am interested in things and people only from the point of view of the painter and the philosopher. And besides, I'm too old. But what a misfortune that one of us is not an odalisque, so as to complete the picture!" It was not the Orient of Decamps, or even of Delacroix, that began to haunt my imagination after the Baron had left me, but the old Orient of the *Arabian Nights* that I had been so fond of; and, little by little losing myself in the network of dark streets, I thought of the Caliph Haroun al-Raschid, seeking adventure in the remote quarters of Bagdad. Moreover, the warm night and the exertion of walking had made me thirsty, but for a long time all the bars had been closed and taxis were

few on account of the scarcity of gasolene and those I did see, driven by Syrians or Negroes, did not even take the trouble to answer my signals. The only place where I could have secured something to drink and regained the strength to continue my homeward way would have been in some hotel. But in the street I had come to, rather far from the center of the city, the hotels had all shut down since the Gothas began dropping their bombs over Paris. It was the same with nearly all the large stores, the owners of which, either because they were unable to get employees or themselves seized with fear, had fled to the country, leaving on the door one of the customary handwritten notices announcing that they would reopen at a distant and, moreover, problematical date. The other establishments which had still been able to keep going announced in a similar manner that they were open only twice a week. One felt that poverty, despair and fear inhabited the whole quarter. I was all the more surprised, therefore, to notice, among all these abandoned buildings, one where life seemed, on the contrary, to have triumphed over fright and failure and to be maintaining its activity and fulness. Behind the closed shutters of every window the lights, although shaded to comply with police regulations, disclosed a complete disregard of economy. And the door was constantly opening to let some new guest in or out. This hotel must have aroused the envy of all the nearby business men because of the money its owners were apparently making; and my curiosity was likewise aroused when I saw an officer come out quickly fifteen yards ahead of me—in other words, too far away for me to recognise him in the darkness.

Nevertheless, something caught my attention, not his face, which I did not see, nor his uniform, concealed under a large ulster; but the remarkable disproportion between the distance he covered and the few seconds he took to execute this sortie, after the fashion of a besieged party attempting a sally. In consequence, although I did not actually recognise him, I thought—I will not say of the general appearance,

nor the slenderness, nor the gait or quickness of Saint-Loup, but of the sort of ubiquity that was so characteristic of him. The mysterious officer able to occupy so many different points in such a short space of time disappeared into a cross street without having noticed me and I stood there, wondering whether or not to enter this hotel, the unpretentious appearance of which made me doubt very much whether it was Saint-Loup I had seen coming out of it. I instinctively recalled that Saint-Loup had been unjustly involved in an espionage case because his name had been found in letters seized on a German officer. He was completely vindicated by the military authorities, let me hasten to say. Nevertheless, in spite of myself, I connected this circumstance with what I had just seen. Was this hotel serving as a rendezvous for spies? The officer had been out of sight for some time when I saw privates of several branches of the service go in, and this strengthened my suspicions. In addition, I was extremely thirsty. "I shall probably be able to get something to drink here," I said to myself, and I took advantage of this pretext to try to satisfy also my curiosity, notwithstanding the uneasiness mingled with it. So I do not think it was merely the curiosity aroused by the meeting with the officer which decided me to mount the short flight of steps, at the top of which the door of a sort of lobby was open, doubtless on account of the heat. At first I thought I was not going to be able to satisfy my curiosity because I heard several people who came and asked for rooms get the reply that there was not a single one left. But then I caught on that evidently the only thing against those people was that they did not belong to this nest of spies, for when a sailor applied a moment later, they quickly gave him Room 28. Without being seen, thanks to the darkness, I was able to catch sight of some soldiers and two workmen, quietly chatting in a small, stuffy room, gaudily decorated with colored pictures of women cut out of illustrated magazines. These men were talking quietly and voicing patriotic opinions. "What else can a fellow do?

I will stand by my buddies," one of them was saying. "You bet I don't expect to get killed," another, who, from what I was able to gather, was going back the next day to a dangerous post, replied in response to good wishes which I had not heard. "I declare, at twenty-two and after only six months' service, that would be rotten luck," he exclaimed in a tone in which one detected not so much a desire to live long as a conviction that he was reasoning correctly and that the fact of being only twenty-two ought to make it more likely, and even certain, that he would not be killed. "In Paris," another remarked, "it's the limit, you'd never know a war was going on! Hey there, Jule, you're going to enlist, I hope." "You bet I am! I want to go and take a crack at those lousy Boches." "But that fellow Joffre does nothing but make love to the wives of cabinet ministers. What has he ever done?" "It's a shame to listen to such talk," said a middle-aged aviator, turning toward the workman who had just spoken. "I wouldn't advise you to talk like that in the front-line trenches; the boys would soon put an end to your chatter."

The banality of these conversations did not give me much desire to listen to any more and I was about to enter or else go down the steps again when I was jolted out of my indifference by hearing these remarks, which made me shudder: "Can you beat it, the boss not back yet! By God, I haven't the least idea where he's going to get chains at this time of night." "What of it, since the guy's tied up all right?" "It's true he's tied up, but he is and he isn't. If they tied me up like that, I could get away all right." "But the padlock is on." "Sure, it's on, but anybody could open it in a pinch. The trouble is, the chains aren't long enough." "You're not explaining to *me* about it, I hope! Didn't I beat him all night, till my hands were covered with blood? It's your turn to-night." "Not mine. It's Maurice's. It'll be my turn Sunday; the boss promised it." Now I understood why they had needed the sailor's strong arms. Since they turned away peaceful citizens, the hotel was not merely

a "hang-out" for spies. Some horrible crime was going to be committed if someone did not appear on the scene in time to expose it and have the guilty ones arrested. And yet it all seemed like a dream, a fairy tale, in that peaceful night, with the menace overhead. So it was with both the pride of an officer of the law and the voluptuous thrill of a poet that I stepped deliberately into the hotel. I touched my hat lightly and those present, without getting up, returned my greeting more or less courteously. "Could somebody kindly tell me to whom I should apply to get a room and have something to drink sent up?" "Just wait a minute, the boss is out." "But the 'chief' is upstairs," broke in one of the talkers. "Why, you know very well he is not to be disturbed." "Do you think they can give me a room?" "Guess so." "Number 43 ought to be free," said the young man who was sure he wasn't going to be killed because he was only twenty-two. And he moved along the sofa slightly to make room for me. "Why not open the window a bit, there's so much smoke in here?" suggested the aviator. And the fact is, every man had his pipe or his cigarette. "All right, but then close the shutters first. You know lights are forbidden on account of the Zeppelins." "There won't be any more Zeppelins. I saw in the paper where they had all been shot down." "There won't be any more, there won't be any more; what do you know about it? When you have done fifteen months' service, as I have, and brought down your fifth Boche airplane, then you can talk. You shouldn't believe the newspapers. Yesterday they were over Compiègne. They killed a mother and her two children." "A mother and two children!" the young man who had good hopes of not being killed exclaimed with an air of profound pity and a tender look in his eyes; he had a frank, energetic and very winning countenance. "We don't get any word from Big Jule. His godmother hasn't had a letter from him for a week; this is the first time he has ever gone so long without writing to her." "Who is his godmother?" "The lady that takes care of the com-

fort station just below the Olympia." "Are they lovers?" "What are you talking about? She's a married woman, as straight as they make 'em. She sends him money every week just because she's good-hearted. She's a swell woman." "So you know Big Jule?" "Do I know him?" replied the twenty-two-year-old with some heat. He's one of my closest friends. There aren't many I think as much of, and a fine pal, too, always ready to do a fellow a good turn. It sure would be a rotten piece of luck if anything happened to him." Somebody suggested they throw dice and, by the feverish haste with which the twenty-two-year-old shook the dice and called out the numbers, his eyes popping out of his head, it was easy to see that he had the temperament of a gambler. I did not catch what somebody said to him just then, but he exclaimed, in a tone of great scorn, "Big Jule a pimp! You mean, that guy says he is. But I'll be damned if he is. I've seen him pay his girl—yes, pay her. I won't say that Algeria Jenny didn't use to give him something, but she never gave him more than five francs at a time and she a girl who was in a house and making fifty francs a day. To let a girl give him only five francs a guy'd have to be pretty dumb. And now that she's at the front, she has a hard life, I admit, but she can make as much as she pleases—well, she doesn't send him anything. Big Jule a pimp, eh? On that basis, there's plenty more could call themselves pimps. Not only he isn't a pimp, but in my opinion he's a big fool not to take it." The oldest of the lot, who had doubtless been charged by the proprietor, because of his age, with maintaining a certain degree of decent behaviour, having gone to the toilet for a moment, heard only the end of this conversation. But he looked at me instinctively and seemed noticeably annoyed at the impression he felt it must have made on me. Without directly addressing the twenty-two-year-old, although it was he who had just advanced this theory of mercenary love, he said, addressing everybody in general, "You're talking too much and too loud. The window is open. Some people are try-

ing to sleep at this hour. You know, if the boss should come back and find you talking this way, he wouldn't like it." Just at that minute they heard the door open and all became silent, thinking it was "the boss," but it was only a foreign chauffeur, whom they all welcomed enthusiastically. But, catching sight of a superb watch-chain displayed on the newcomer's vest, the twenty-two-year-old questioned him with a laughing glance, following it with a frown and a serious wink in my direction. I caught all this and understood that the glance meant, "What's that? Did you steal it? Congratulations!" while the frown and the wink signified, "Don't say anything—look out for that guy—we don't know him." Suddenly "the boss" came in, loaded down with many yards of heavy chain, strong enough to bind several hardened criminals; he was sweating and exclaimed, "Well, that was some load to carry! If you weren't all of you so lazy, I wouldn't have had to go and get it myself." I told him I wanted a room. "Just for a few hours. I could not find a taxi and I'm not feeling well. But I would like someone to bring me up something to drink." "Pete, go down cellar and bring up some black-currant wine and tell them to get 43 ready. There's 7 ringing. They say they're sick. Sick my eye! They're coke-fiends. They look half doped already. I'll have to throw them out. Did you put a pair of clean sheets in 22? There you are, there's 7 ringing again. Run and see what they want. Come, Maurice, what are you doing there? You know he's waiting for you. Go up to 14A. And step livelier than that!" Maurice went out quickly, following the manager, who disappeared with his chains, somewhat annoyed that I should have caught sight of them. "How come you're so late?" the twenty-two-year-old asks the chauffeur. "Late? How do you make that out? I'm an hour ahead of time. But it's too hot walking. I'm not due till midnight." "Who is it then you're coming for?" "Pamela, the Charmer," said the Oriental chauffeur, his smile disclosing his handsome white teeth. "Ah!" said the twenty-two-year-old. They soon

shewed me up to Room 43, but the atmosphere was so unpleasant and my curiosity was so great that, having drunk my black-currant wine, I started downstairs again; then, taken with another idea, I turned around and went up past my own floor to the very top. Suddenly, from a room isolated at the end of a hallway, there seemed to come smothered cries. I walked quickly in that direction and put my ear to the door. "I beg you, mercy! mercy! Have pity! Release me! Don't hit me so hard!" a voice was saying. "I kiss your feet, I humble myself before you, I won't do it again. Have pity on me!" "No, you worthless trash," another voice replied. "And, since you bawl and crawl on your knees, we're going to chain you to the bed. No pity!" And I heard the cracking of a whip, probably made still more cutting with nails, for I heard cries of pain. Then I noticed that this room had a small, round window opening on the hallway, over which they had neglected to draw the curtain; tiptoeing in the darkness, I made my way softly to this window and there, chained to a bed like Prometheus to his rock, and being beaten by Maurice with a cat-o'-nine-tails which was, as a matter of fact, studded with nails, I saw before me M. de Charlus, bleeding all over and covered with welts which shewed that this was not the first time the torture had taken place. Suddenly the door opened and someone, who luckily had not seen me, entered—it was Jupien. He approached the Baron with a respectful air and a knowing smile. "Well, do you need me for anything?" The Baron begged Jupien to have Maurice go out for a moment. Jupien put him out in the most offhand manner. "Nobody can hear us?" the Baron inquired of Jupien, who reassured him. The Baron knew that Jupien, endowed with the intelligence of a literary man, had no practical sense at all and always talked right out before the people in question, using hidden meanings that deceived nobody and nicknames that everyone recognised. "One second," interrupted Jupien, who had heard a bell ring from Room 3. It was a deputy of *l'Action Libérale* who was

leaving. Jupien did not need to look at the signal-board because he recognised the ring, the deputy being in the habit of coming every day after lunch. That day he had had to change his hour because of his daughter's wedding at noon at Saint-Pierre de Chaillot. So he had come in the evening, but was anxious to leave early on account of his wife, who was quick to worry if he stayed out late, especially in these times of frequent bombings. Jupien was particular about accompanying him to the door, so as to shew the respect he felt for the office of Deputy, but without any idea of seeking advantage for himself. For although this deputy, repudiating the exaggerated program of *l'Action Française* —moreover, he would have been incapable of understanding a single line of Charles Maurras or Léon Daudet—was on good terms with the cabinet ministers, who were flattered to be invited to his hunting parties, Jupien would not have dared ask him for the least assistance in his difficulties with the police. He knew that, if he had ventured to broach the subject to this wealthy and cowardly deputy, he would immediately have lost the most generous of his customers without heading off even the least objectionable of the police raids. Jupien accompanied the deputy to the door, watched him depart with his hat pulled down over his eyes and his coat collar turned up, hoping to slip by undetected (as he did in his campaign platforms) and then went upstairs again to M. de Charlus and said, "That was M. Eugène." At Jupien's, as in sanitariums, they spoke of people by their first names, taking care to whisper the family name besides, either to satisfy the curiosity of the other guests or to add to the prestige of the establishment. Sometimes, however, Jupien did not know the real identity of his customers, so he would draw on his imagination and say that it was this or that stock broker or artist or member of the nobility (merely passing errors, charming for those whose names he used incorrectly) but in the end he had to resign himself to not knowing who "Monsieur Victor" was. In order to please the Baron, Jupien had also the habit of

doing just the opposite to what is considered proper in certain circles, where they say, for instance, "Allow me to present Monsieur Lebrun" (and in your ear, "He calls himself 'Monsieur Lebrun' but in reality he is the Grand Duke of Russia"). In quite the opposite way, Jupien felt that it was not sufficient to introduce a milkman to M. de Charlus. He would whisper, with a significant wink, "He is a milkman, but in reality he is one of the most dangerous *apaches* of Belleville." (You should have seen the suggestive air with which he said "*apache*".) And as if these references were not enough, he would try to add some "honourable mentions," such as, "He has been convicted several times of theft and house-breaking", "He has been in jail for fighting"—the same suggestive manner—"with passers-by, whom he nearly crippled for life", "He has been in the African battalion, where he killed his sergeant."

The Baron was even slightly vexed with Jupien, for he knew that in this house, which he had commissioned his factotum to purchase and to manage with a subordinate in charge, everyone, through the bungling of the uncle of Mlle. d'Oloron, the late Mme. de Cambremer, knew more or less definitely his name and who he was (but many of them thought it an assumed name and, pronouncing it badly, had distorted it, so that he was protected, not by Jupien's discretion, but by their stupidity). But he found it simpler to allow his mind to be set at rest by Jupien's reassurances and, relieved to know that no one could hear them, he said, "I did not want to speak in front of that young man. He's a well meaning lad and does the best he can. But I don't find him brutal enough. I like his looks, but he calls me 'worthless trash' as if it was a lesson he had learned by heart." "Oh no, no one has taught him anything," replied Jupien, without realising the improbability of this assertion. "Moreover, he was mixed up in the murder of a janitor's wife in La Villette." "Ah, that's rather interesting," remarked the Baron, with a smile. "But I happen to have that butcher here now," Jupien suggested, "the man from

the slaughterhouse who looks like Maurice; he just happened to drop in. Do you want to try him out?" "Oh yes, I'd be glad to," the Baron answered. I saw "the man from the slaughterhouse" come in. He did, as a matter of fact, look somewhat like "Maurice" but, what was still more peculiar, both of them had in their faces something of a type which I had never definitely formulated in my mind, but which I realised at that moment was to be discerned in Morel's face—or, if not in his face as I had always seen it, at any rate in a composite countenance which loving eyes, seeing Morel from a different angle, might have been able to compose out of his features. As soon as I had formed in my mind, from details drawn from my recollection of Morel, this model of what he might look like to someone else, I realised that these two young men, one of whom was a jeweller's errand boy and the other a hotel employee, were, in a way, successors to Morel. Should I infer from this that M. de Charlus, at least in one species of love affair, was always faithful to one uniform type of manly beauty and that the desire which had led him to select these young men, one after the other, was the same as that which had prompted him to accost Morel on the station platform at Doncières, and that all three of them resembled somewhat the Grecian youth whose figure, carved like a cameo in the sapphire of M. de Charlus's eyes, gave to his glance that strange something which had frightened me the first day at Balbec? Or was it that, his love for Morel having modified the type he sought, when he wished to console himself for Morel's absence, he selected men who resembled him? Another supposition I made was that perhaps there had never been between him and Morel, notwithstanding appearances, any relations other than those of mere friendship and that M. de Charlus had young men come to Jupien's who resembled Morel enough for him to have with them the illusion that he was enjoying pleasure with Morel. It is true that, considering all that M. de Charlus had done for Morel, this supposition would have

seemed rather improbable if one did not know that love drives us not only to the greatest sacrifices for the one we love, but sometimes even to the sacrifice of our desire itself (which, by the way, it becomes more difficult to satisfy in proportion as the loved one feels our love increase). Another thing which makes this supposition appear more probable than it seems at first glance (although doubtless it does not agree with the facts) is to be found in M. de Charlus's high-strung and profoundly passionate temperament, in which he resembled Saint-Loup and which may have played, at the beginning of his relations with Morel, the same rôle, although more refined and negative, as, in the case of Saint-Loup, at the beginning of his affair with Rachel. One's relations with the woman one loves (and this can apply also to love for a young man) may remain platonic for quite another reason than the chastity of the woman or the non-sensual character of the love she inspires. This reason may be that the lover, too impatient through the very excess of his love, is not able to await with sufficient affectation of indifference the moment when he will obtain his desire. He keeps continually renewing his advances, he does not cease writing to his belovéd, he constantly seeks to see her, she refuses, he becomes desperate. From that moment she understands that, if she grants him her companionship, her friendship, these favours will appear already so great to one who had ceased to dare hope to obtain them that she can spare herself the trouble of granting anything further and confidently await the moment when, no longer able to endure not seeing her, he will be willing to end the war on any terms and she can impose a peace that shall have as its first condition a platonic relationship. Moreover, during all the time preceding this treaty, the lover, continually anxious and constantly on the lookout for a letter or even a glance, has finally ceased to think of physical possession, the desire for which tormented him at first but has now worn itself out with waiting and given place to needs of a different order, although still more painful if not satisfied.

Then the pleasure one had hoped, in the earlier days, to get from caresses is now enjoyed, although quite changed in character, in the form of friendly words and promises of companionship, which bring a delightful sense of relief after the strain of uncertainty—or sometimes merely after a chilly glance overcast with that mist of aloofness which seems to remove the loved one far beyond the hope of ever seeing her again. Woman divines all this instinctively and knows that she can indulge in the luxury of never surrendering herself to a man whose incurable desire for her she senses if he has been too high-strung to hide it from her at the start. She is only too happy to receive, without giving of her person, more than she usually obtains when she does. This is why extremely neurotic men believe in the chastity of their idol. And the halo they put around her head is also itself, although quite indirectly, as has been seen, a result of their excessive love. There is, then, in women what exists in an unconscious state in certain unwittingly crafty drugs, such as soporifics or morphine. The person to whom these drugs are indispensable is not he to whom they bring the delights of sleep or a genuine sensation of well-being. He is not the one who would purchase them for their weight in gold or in exchange for all he possesses, but that other addict—quite possibly, the same man, by the way, but changed with the lapse of time—to whom the drug no longer brings sleep or any voluptuous sensation, but who, when he does not have it, is a prey to a restlessness which he is determined to calm at any price, even at the cost of his life. As for M. de Charlus—whose case, on the whole, comes under the general laws of love, though with a slight allowance due to the two parties being of the same sex—it mattered not that he belonged to a family older than the Capetian dynasty, that he was wealthy and sought after in vain by exclusive society, while Morel was a nobody; he might even have said to Morel, as he had said to me, "I am a prince; I wish to promote your welfare"; Morel would still have the upper hand, provided he refused to surrender his person.

And for him to refuse, it was probably sufficient that he should feel himself loved. The same strong aversion which the great feel for "climbers" who wish to attach themselves to them at any cost, is felt by the virile man toward the sexual invert and by the woman for a too devoted lover. M. de Charlus not only had all the social advantages, but he would have made dazzling offers to Morel. Nevertheless, it is possible that all that might have been hurled in vain against the resistance of one man's will. In that case, it would have been with the Baron as with the Germans (to whom, anyhow, he belonged by his ancestry) who in the war going on at that moment were winning victories on every front, as the Baron was a little too fond of repeating; but of what use were their victories, since after each one they found the Allies more determined than ever to refuse the one thing the Germans would have liked to obtain, peace and reconciliation? In the same way Napoleon invaded Russia and then with a magnanimous gesture demanded that the authorities come before him. But no one appeared.

I went down the stairs and into the little lobby, where Maurice, uncertain whether he might be sent for again and under strict instructions from Jupien to wait, was engaged in a game of cards with one of his comrades. They were all very much excited over a *croix de guerre* which had been found on the floor; no one knew who had lost it or whom to send it to in order to save the owner from getting into trouble. Then they discussed the heroism of an officer who had met death while trying to save his orderly. "Just the same, there are some fine people among the rich. I'd be glad to get shot for a guy like that," said Maurice, who evidently performed his terrible flagellations on the Baron only by a sort of mechanical habit, the result of a neglected upbringing, and through need of money and a preference for earning it in a way that was supposed to involve less effort than regular work—and perhaps involved more. But, as M. de Charlus had feared, he was probably kind-hearted and apparently a lad of admirable courage. He almost had

tears in his eyes in speaking of the death of that officer, and the twenty-two-year-old was not less moved. "Ah yes, they're swell guys! Poor devils like us haven't much to lose, but for a gentleman who has a lot of flunkeys and can go and drink his *apéritif* at six o'clock every day, that's really very fine. You can laugh all you want to, but when you see guys like that die, it gets under your hide. The good Lord ought not let rich men like that get killed; in the first place, they're too useful to the workingman. Just for a death like that every last one of the Boches ought to be killed; and think of what they did at Louvain, and cutting off little children's hands. No, I'm no better than the next man, but somehow or other I'd let them shoot me full of holes before I'd obey a lot of barbarians like them; for they aren't men, they're real barbarians, you can't deny that." In short, all these young men were patriots. Just one of them, slightly wounded in the arm and soon to return to the front, was not up to the others, for he said, "Hell! it wasn't the right kind of a wound"—meaning one that warrants exemption, just as Mme. Swann used to say, "I've succeeded in catching that wretched influenza." The door opened again to admit the chauffeur, who had stepped out for a bit of air. "What! through already? That wasn't very long," he exclaimed on noticing Maurice, whom he had believed to be engaged in beating the man whom they had nicknamed *l'Homme Enchaîné,* by allusion to a newspaper that was being published at that time. "It didn't seem long to you outdoors getting the air," replied Maurice, vexed to have people see that he had not given satisfaction upstairs. "But if you had to lay it on with all your might in this heat, the way I did—if it wasn't for the fifty francs he gives me." "And then, too, he's a man who talks well; you feel he's well educated. Does he think this war will soon be over?" "He says we'll never be able to lick them, that it will end without anybody winning." "By God, so he's a Boche, then?" "I told you fellows you're talking too loud," said the oldest one as he noticed me. "Are you through with

the room?" "Aw, shut your trap, you're not the boss here." "Yes, I'm through and I came in to pay my bill." "You'd better pay the manager. Maurice, go call the boss." "But I don't like to put you to that trouble." "No trouble at all." Maurice went upstairs and came back, saying, "He'll be right down." I gave him two francs for his pains. He blushed with pleasure. "Thanks. I'll send this to my brother; he's a prisoner. No, he isn't badly off; it all depends on the camp you're in." While we were speaking, two very fashionably attired customers, their dress suits and white ties shewing beneath their overcoats—Russians, it seemed to me, to judge from their slight accent—stood on the threshold, deliberating whether to go in or not. It was evidently their first visit; someone must have pointed out the place to them and they were apparently divided between great timidity and a strong desire, a temptation to go in. One of them, a handsome young man, kept saying every other minute, with a half-questioning, half-urging smile, "What of it? After all, what the devil do we care?" But, however much he may have wanted to indicate thereby that they did not care about the consequences, he was probably not so indifferent after all, for he did not follow up his remark with the slightest move to step in, but stood looking at his companion, smiling in the manner described and repeating, "After all, what the devil do we care?" That "After all, what the devil do we care?" was one example in a thousand of that splendid language (so different from the one we usually speak) in which emotion sidetracks what we intended to say and suddenly brings out in its place an entirely different remark, drawn from an unknown lake where dwell expressions that have no connexion with our thoughts—and for that very reason throw a revealing light on them. I remember once, when Françoise came in without our hearing her while Albertine was lying close against me, naked, the latter, wishing to warn me, exclaimed instinctively, "Why, there's *la belle Françoise!*" But for that, Françoise doubtless would not have noticed anything, as she could not see

very well and was merely passing through the room rather far from us. But that unusual expression, *la belle Françoise,* which Albertine had never used in her life before, automatically betrayed its origin; Françoise felt that it had been uttered at random under an emotional stress and she understood everything without seeing anything and went out muttering in her patois the word "*poutana.*" Another time, later on, when Bloch had raised a family and married off one of his daughters to a Catholic, an ill-bred gentleman remarked to her that he was under the impression someone had told him her father was a Jew and he asked what her maiden name was. In replying, the young woman, who had been "Mademoiselle Bloch" from birth, gave the name a German pronunciation, as the Duc de Guermantes would have done, that is to say, she pronounced the *ch,* not like *ck,* but like the Germanic guttural *ch.*

The manager (to come back to the scene at the hotel, into which the two Russians had finally decided to venture—"After all, what the devil do we care?") had not yet returned when Jupien came in to complain that they were talking too loud and the neighbors would object. But he stopped short with astonishment when he caught sight of me. "You fellows go out on the landing," he said. They were all getting up when I said to him, "It would be simpler if these young men stayed here and you and I stepped outside a minute." He followed me out, very much upset. I explained why I had come. You could hear patrons asking the manager if he could not get them a footman or a choir boy or a coloured chauffeur. All occupations were of interest to these old dotards, likewise all branches of the army and allies of all nationalities. Some asked specially for Canadians, perhaps unconsciously under the spell of their accent, so slight that one does not know whether it is that of Old France or of England. Because of their kilts, and because certain lacustrine dreams are often associated with desires of this sort, Scotchmen were at a premium. And, since each case of insanity takes on special characteristics,

and sometimes an exaggerated form, from its own peculiar circumstances, one old man who had satisfied all his curiosities asked insistently if they could not get him a mutilated soldier. We heard someone coming slowly down the stairs. With characteristic indiscretion, Jupien could not resist telling me that it was the Baron and that he must not see me under any circumstances but that, if I would step into the little room adjoining the lobby where the young men were sitting, he would open the peep-hole, a device which he had installed so that the Baron might be able to see and hear without being seen, but which he said he was now going to turn against the Baron for my benefit. "Only don't budge!" And hurrying me into the dark room, he left me. The truth is, he had no other room to give me, his hotel being full, notwithstanding the war. The one I had just given up had been taken by the Vicomte de Courvoisier, who, having been able to get away from the Red Cross at X... for two days, had come to Paris for a little recreation before joining the Viscountess at their château, where he would explain to her that he had been unable to make the earlier train. He little suspected that M. de Charlus was only a few yards away from him, and the Baron suspected it just as little, since he had never met his cousin at Jupien's and the Viscount had been careful to conceal his identity from the latter. Soon the Baron came in, just as Jupien had said, but walking with some difficulty on account of his hurts, to which, however, he must have been accustomed. Although his indulgence was over and he was coming in merely to give Maurice the money he owed him, he looked around with a tender and inquisitive expression at the young men sitting there and evidently counted on having an entirely platonic but amorously prolonged chat with each one of them. I caught again, in the sprightly playfulness he exhibited before this harem which almost seemed to intimidate him, the little turns of the head and body and the coy glances which had struck me when he walked in that first evening at La Raspelière, graceful mannerisms inherited from some

grandmother I had never known, his resemblance to her being hidden in everyday life by a more virile expression, but coming expansively to the surface in the form of a coquettish desire to play the *grande dame* in certain situations where he wished to please a group of inferior social standing. Jupien had recommended these young men to the Baron's kindly interest, telling him they were all Belleville "toughs" and that any one of them would "do it" with his own sister for twenty francs. As to that, he lied and at the same time told the truth. Better and more humane than he admitted to the Baron, they were not a savage lot. But the very men who believed them to be so wicked would nevertheless talk to them with the utmost confidence, just as though these ruffians were worthy of it. A sadist may think he is talking to a murderer, but his ingenuous soul is not changed thereby and he is dumbfounded at the mendacity of these men, who are not murderers at all but want to "pick up a piece of change" in an easy manner, and who alternately kill off and resuscitate a father, a mother or a sister because they contradict themselves in their conversation with the "customer" whom they are trying to please. The "customer," in his *naïveté,* is struck dumb with astonishment, for, with his arbitrary conception of the gigolo, fascinated by the number of murders he believes him to have committed, he is dismayed by the lies and contradictions he discovers in his statements. Everyone seemed to know M. de Charlus and he stopped a long time with each of them, talking what he thought was their language, partly through pretentious affectation of local color, partly from a sadistic pleasure in contact with low life. "Look here, it's a shame! I saw you in front of the Olympia with a couple of broads. You wanted to pick up some jack. That's how faithful you are to me!" Fortunately, the young man to whom this was addressed did not have time to protest that he had never accepted "jack" from a woman, as this would have lessened M. de Charlus's thrill; he saved his protest for the end of the accusation,

declaring, "No indeed, I am never unfaithful to you." The word "unfaithful" gave M. de Charlus keen pleasure and as his real character shewed through in spite of himself underneath the one he affected, he turned to Jupien and said, "Isn't he a dear to tell me that! And how well he says it! You would almost think it was the truth. And, after all, what's the difference whether it's true or not, so long as he succeeds in making me believe it? What pretty little eyes he has! Here, I'm going to give you two big kisses to make it all right, my little fellow. Will you think of me when you're in the trenches? I hope it isn't too bad there?" "Hell, some days a hand grenade goes right past you." And the young man set to imitating the noises of the grenades, airplanes, etc. "But you have to take it the way the rest of them do, and you can be positively sure we'll go through with it to the end." "To the end! If we only knew to what end!" the pessimistic Baron said sadly. "Didn't you see in the newspapers that Sarah Bernhardt said, 'France will go through with it to the very end; the French will sooner die to a man'?" "I do not doubt for one instant that the French will die bravely to the very last man," assented M. de Charlus, as if that were the simplest thing in the world to do, although he himself had no intention of doing anything of the kind but merely thought in that way to offset the impression of pacifism he gave when he forgot himself. "I don't doubt it at all, only I wonder how far *Madame* Sarah Bernhardt is qualified to speak in the name of France. Ah, I don't seem to know this charming, delightful young man," he interrupted, noticing one whom he did not recognise or, perhaps, had never seen before. He greeted him as he would have greeted a prince at Versailles, and, in order to seize the opportunity to get a little extra pleasure gratis (just as, when I was little and my mother had given an order at Boissier's or Gouache's, a saleswoman would offer me a bonbon from one of the glass jars she presided over) he took the "charming" young man's hand, held it firmly for a long time, Prussian fashion, and smilingly

looked him straight in the eye for the interminable "minute" the photographers used to make us hold a pose on days when the light was poor. "My dear sir," he said, "I am charmed, enchanted, to make your acquaintance. He has lovely hair!" he remarked, turning to Jupien. Then he went over to Maurice and gave him his fifty francs, first taking him around the waist and saying, "You never told me you had bumped off a janitor's wife in Belleville." And M. de Charlus chortled with ecstasy and put his face close to Maurice's. "Oh, Monsieur le Baron," protested the gigolo, whom Jupien had forgotten to coach on this point, "how can you believe such a thing?"—either because it was not true or because, although true, he considered it abominable and the sort of thing one should disavow. "What! I lay hands on my fellow man? Now a Boche, that's different, because it's in war, but a woman, and an old woman besides!" This declaration of virtuous principles acted like a cold shower on the Baron, who drew away brusquely, handing Maurice his money, however, though with the disgruntled air of someone who has been "gypped" but pays reluctantly, rather than make a scene.

The unpleasant impression this incident had produced on the Baron was made still worse by the way the beneficiary thanked him for the money, saying, "I'm going to send this to my dear old father and mother and I'll keep some for my brother who is at the front." These touching sentiments disappointed M. de Charlus almost as much as the rather stereotyped peasant phraseology exasperated him. Jupien occasionally warned the young men to be more "hard-boiled." Then one of them, with the air of confessing something diabolical, hazarded the following: "I say, Baron, you may not believe it but, when I was a kid, I used to look through the keyhole and watch my father and mother embracing one another. That was naughty, wasn't it? You probably think I'm stuffing you, but I swear it's just as I tell you." And M. de Charlus was both discouraged and exasperated by this forced attempt to seem perverted which

resulted only in disclosing so much stupidity and innocence. But the most desperate robber or murderer would not have satisfied him, because such men don't talk of their deeds; besides, there is in the sadist, no matter how kindly he may be—in fact, directly in proportion to his kindliness—a thirst for wickedness which the wicked cannot satisfy because they act with a different purpose in view.

It was no use for the young man, realizing too late the mistake he had made, to say he had no use for the cops and to carry his audacity so far as to say to the Baron, "Say, gimme a date, will you?"; the spell was broken. You felt that it was "faked," as in the books of writers who make an effort to use slang. It was in vain the young man described in detail all the obscenities he indulged in with his girl. M. de Charlus was merely struck to see how little variety there was in these obscenities. And this was not just an insincere conclusion. Nothing is more limited in its range than sexual pleasure and vice. In this sense, changing the meaning of the phrase, it can truly be said that one turns constantly in a vicious circle.

"How unpretentious he is! You'd never take him for a prince," some of the habitués said when M. de Charlus had gone out, accompanied to the foot of the stairs by Jupien, to whom the Baron did not stop complaining about the young man's too virtuous character. From the dissatisfied air of Jupien, who must have drilled him beforehand, one realised that the pseudo-murderer was going to get a famous dressing down shortly. "He's just the opposite to what you told me," the Baron added, so that Jupien might profit by the lesson for another time. "He seems to have a kindly nature and he expresses feelings of respect for his family." "Still, he's on bad terms with his father," Jupien objected, taken unawares. "They live together, but they work in different bars." This was obviously a rather mild crime as compared with murder, but Jupien had been caught unprepared. The Baron added nothing further for, even though he wished his pleasures to be prepared for him,

he wanted to be able to persuade himself that they were not rehearsed. "He's a real bandit. He said what he did just to fool you. You're too naïve," added Jupien, to clear himself, but succeeding only in ruffling M. de Charlus's pride.

At the same time that they thought the Baron a prince, the people in the establishment on the other hand regretted very much the death of a man about whom the gigolos said, "I don't know his name but it seems he's a baron"; he was none other than the Prince de Foux, father of Saint-Loup's friend. Giving his wife to believe that he spent a great deal of his time at the club, in reality he passed many an hour at Jupien's, gossiping and telling society tales before a lot of young hoodlums. He was a tall, fine-looking man, like his son. It is surprising that M. de Charlus, perhaps because he had always known the Prince socially, was unaware that they had the same tastes. People even went so far as to hint that the Prince had some years before been in the habit of gratifying them at the expense of his own son (Saint-Loup's friend) still a high-school lad, but this was probably false. On the contrary, unusually well informed as to certain habits which many people know nothing about, he was very watchful as to whom his son associated with. One day, when a poorly dressed man followed the young Prince de Foux home and tossed a note in through the window, the father picked it up. Although the intruder was not in the same class with the elder M. de Foux socially, he was from another point of view, so that he had no trouble finding among their respective partners in vice an intermediary who stopped the Prince from doing anything about the matter by proving to him that it was the young lad who had instigated this audacity on the part of the older man. And that was quite possible. For the Prince de Foux may have succeeded in preserving his son from evil associations outwardly, but not from heredity. As to that, however, the young Prince, like his father, kept this side of his character hidden from the people of his own social class,

although he went further than anyone else with people of another class.

"They say he has a million francs a day to throw away," remarked the twenty-two-year-old, to whom this statement did not appear at all improbable. Soon they heard the rumble of the taxi coming for M. de Charlus. At that instant I caught sight of a person who looked like an elderly lady in a black skirt, coming slowly out of a nearby room, evidently accompanied by a soldier. I soon saw my mistake; it was a priest—that thing so rare and in France absolutely exceptional, a priest of evil character. It was evident that the soldier was chaffing his companion on the discrepancy between his clerical garb and his unclerical conduct, for the priest, raising a finger to his hideous face with the grave gesture of a doctor of theology, said sententiously, "What do you expect? I am not"—I thought he was going to say "a saint"—"an angel." Having finished the matter he had come for, he left, saying good-bye to Jupien, who was just returning from seeing the Baron to the door, but the depraved old priest absent-mindedly forgot to pay for his room, so Jupien, who never lost his wits, rattled the box in which he put each guest's money, and called out, "Something to help carry on the good work, M. l'abbé?" The wretched character apologised, dropped in his contribution and disappeared. Jupien then came to let me out of the black hole, where I had not dared move a muscle. "Just step for a moment into the lobby, where my young lads are sitting around, while I go upstairs and lock the room. Since you're a lodger, it will look all right." The manager was there, so I paid him for my room. At the same moment a young man in a dinner jacket came in and with an air of authority asked the manager, "Can I have Léon to-morrow morning at a quarter to eleven, instead of eleven o'clock, because I'm lunching downtown?" "That depends how long the abbé keeps him," was the reply. This did not appear to satisfy the young man, who seemed on the point of saying some uncomplimentary things about the abbé,

but his anger took another turn when he caught sight of me. Walking right up to the manager, he muttered in a low but enraged voice, "Who is that over there? What kind of business are you up to?" The manager, greatly embarrassed, explained that my being there was of no importance, that I was just a lodger. The young man did not appear pacified by this explanation, for he continued to mutter, "It is extremely disagreeable. Such things should not be allowed to occur. You know I don't like it at all. If you keep this up, I'll never set foot in this place again." The carrying out of this threat did not appear very imminent, however, for, when he left, although still angry, he directed that Léon try to be free at a quarter before eleven, or even ten-thirty if possible. Jupien came back to get me and walked to the door with me. "I wouldn't want you to misjudge me," he said. "This house doesn't bring me in as much money as you think. I have to have some respectable lodgers, although it's true, if I depended on them, I'd be losing money all the time. Here it's the opposite to the Carmelites; it's thanks to vice that virtue is able to exist. No, the reason I took this house—or, rather, the reason I had the manager you saw take it—was simply to do a favour to the Baron and make his last years pass pleasantly." Jupien had in mind more than merely sadistic scenes such as I had just witnessed and also the practice of the Baron's special vice. Even just for someone to talk to, to keep him company and to play cards with, the Baron was no longer contented with any but common people, who exploited him. Trying to imitate the ways of the rabble is obviously quite as comprehensible as snobbishness. Both traits had, moreover, long been combined alternately in the character of M. de Charlus, who did not consider anyone quite aristocratic enough for his social intercourse, nor near enough to the *apache* for his other contacts. "I detest half-way types," he used to say. "Middle-class comedy is stilted. I must have either the princesses of classic tragedy or the broad farce of the common people. *Phèdre* or the clowns—nothing

in between!" But finally the balance between these two inclinations was destroyed. Whether through weariness of old age or the extension of his sensuality to even the most commonplace relationships, the Baron now passed his life entirely among social inferiors, thus, without knowing it, continuing the tradition of not a few of his illustrious ancestors, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, the Prince d'Harcourt, the Duc de Berry, whom Saint-Simon pictures to us as spending their lives among their lackeys, who extorted huge sums of money from them, taking a hand in their games, to such a point that, when one had to call on these great noblemen, it was embarrassing to find them familiarly engaged in playing cards or drinking with their household servants. "I do it especially to save him from getting into a lot of trouble," Jupien went on, "because, you see, the Baron is just a big boy. Even now, when he has right here everything he could want, still he goes around here, there and everywhere, cutting up. And with his generous disposition, that might easily have serious consequences, especially in these times. Why, didn't he frighten a hotel doorman almost to death just the other day by offering him a large sum of money to come home with him? Home with him! What a reckless thing to do! The fellow, although he cares only for women, was reassured when he understood what was wanted of him. When he heard all the promises of money, he took the Baron for a spy, and he felt much relieved when he learned that he was being asked to sell, not his fatherland, but his person—which is perhaps no more moral, but certainly less dangerous and, above all, not so difficult." While listening to Jupien, I was saying to myself, "What a misfortune that M. de Charlus is not a novelist or a poet, not in order to describe what he sees; but a man like Charlus has reached such a point in his sexual life that scandals arise all around him, he is forced to take life seriously and put emotion into his pleasures, he is prevented from settling down permanently into an ironic, objective view of things; there is an unbroken stream of suffering running through his life. Nearly every

time he makes advances to someone, he has to undergo humiliating insult, if not the risk of prison. The training of poets, as of children, is accomplished by cuffs and blows. If M. de Charlus had been a novelist, the house that Jupien had set up for him, cutting down the risks to such an extent (at least—for a raid by the police was always to be feared—the risks with regard to individuals, whose attitude the Baron could not be sure of if he accosted them in the street) would have been a misfortune for him. But M. de Charlus was only a dilettante in art and had no idea of doing any writing nor any talent in that direction. "What's more," Jupien continued, "let me confess to you that I don't feel any great scruples about making money in this way. As for what goes on here, I can no longer conceal from you that I like it, that it's the chief pleasure in life for me. Now, is there any law against accepting pay for things one does not consider wrong? You're better educated than I am and you will doubtless tell me that Socrates did not believe he should accept money for his lessons, but in our day professors of philosophy do not feel that way about it, nor doctors, nor painters, nor playwrights, nor theatre directors. Don't get the idea that this business brings you in touch only with the dregs of society. It is true, the manager of an establishment of this sort is like a high-grade prostitute; he receives only men, but outstanding men of every kind, who are generally, other things being equal, among the finest, most sensitive and likable men in their professions. This house, let me assure you, could very readily be transformed into a headquarters for wit and a news bureau." But I was still preoccupied with thinking about the blows I had seen M. de Charlus receiving. And to tell the truth, if one knew him well, how proud he was, how satiated with social pleasures, how easily his caprices changed into passion for men of the lowest rank and the worst character, one could quite understand that his large fortune, which, had it fallen to the lot of a *parvenu,* would have made him supremely happy by allowing him to marry his daughter to a duke and invite lords and

ladies to his hunting parties, M. de Charlus was glad to possess because it made it possible for him to have control over one, perhaps several establishments where young men were always available for his enjoyment. Perhaps it would have been so even without the Baron's vice. He was the descendant of so many great noblemen, princes of the blood or dukes about whom Saint-Simon tells that they associated with no one who could be named. "Meanwhile," I said to Jupien, "this house is very different from that; it is worse than an insane asylum, since the madness of the inmates here is staged, reconstructed and exhibited; it's a veritable pandemonium. I thought, like the caliph in the *Arabian Nights*, that I had arrived just in time to rescue a man who was being beaten, and it was another story drawn from the *Arabian Nights* that I saw enacted before my eyes, that of an old woman changed into a dog, who gets someone to beat her so that she may regain her original form." Jupien seemed greatly disturbed by my words, because he realised that I had seen the Baron being beaten. He was silent for a moment; then, with that happy faculty which had so frequently struck me in that self-made man when he would find such gracious words with which to greet Françoise and me in the courtyard of our house, he said, "You have mentioned various tales from the *Arabian Nights*, but I know one that has a certain connexion with the title of a book I believe I noticed at the Baron's." He was alluding to a translation of Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* which I had sent to M. de Charlus. "If you ever have a fancy some evening to see—I won't say forty, but ten thieves, you need only come here. To know whether I am in, just look up there; I leave my little window open and lighted up; that means that I am here and one may enter. That is *my* 'sesame.' I say only 'sesame.' As for the lilies, if that's what you're after, I would advise you to seek them elsewhere." Whereupon, he bade me good-night in a rather offhand manner, for an aristocratic clientèle and a gang of young men whom he led like a pirate chief had developed in him a certain familiarity.

He had scarcely left me when the siren shrieked forth, followed at once by a violent barrage fire. We could feel that the German airplane was very near, hovering just over our heads, and suddenly the noise of a powerful explosion shewed that it had dropped one of its bombs.

In Jupien's hotel, a number of men who did not wish to flee had all come together in the same room. They were not mutually acquainted, but still they were all of about the same social standing, wealthy and aristocratic. There was something repugnant in the appearance of each of them, probably due to indulgence in degrading forms of enjoyment. One of them, an enormous man, had a face all covered with red splotches, like a drunkard's. I had been told that at the start he was not a heavy drinker, but merely amused himself making younger men drink. Finally, alarmed at the thought of being drafted (though he appeared to be over fifty) being very stout, he set himself to drinking uninterruptedly in order to try to increase his weight beyond a hundred kilos, at which figure a man was exempted. Now, this deliberate procedure having developed into an incurable habit, wherever one might leave him and no matter how long one watched over him, he always wound up in a wineshop. But the moment he began to talk, one could see that, though of mediocre intelligence, he was a man of knowledge, breeding and culture. Another man from the upper ranks of society had also come in, this one very young and of strikingly handsome physique. In his case, as a matter of fact, there were as yet no outward marks of vicious habits but, what was even more disquieting, there were inner indications. Very tall and with a charming countenance, his manner of speaking revealed an intelligence that was, without exaggeration, really remarkable and quite different from that of his alcoholic neighbour. And yet every remark he made was accompanied by a facial expression suited to something entirely different. As though he had been endowed with the entire range of human facial expressions but had grown up in another world, he brought them out in the wrong order

and seemed to scatter smiles and glances about him at random, without any relation to what was being said. For his sake, I hope (if he is still alive, as is doubtless the case) that he was at that time under the influence, not of a chronic malady, but merely of a temporary intoxication. It is probable that, if you had asked these men for their calling cards, you would have been surprised to find that they were all of high social position. But one vice or another—and that greatest vice of all, lack of will power, which makes it impossible to resist any of the others—brought them together there, in separate rooms, it is true, but every single evening, I am told, so that, although society women knew their names, they had gradually lost sight of them and never had an opportunity to entertain them at their homes any more. The men still received social invitations, but habit always brought them back to their common rendezvous of vice. Moreover, they made little secret of it, in contrast to the young porters, workingmen and such like who served for their pleasures. And that is easily understood for this reason, besides many others one can readily imagine. For a workingman or servant to go to that place was just about as bad as for a supposedly respectable woman to go to a house of assignation. Some men who admitted having gone there once denied vigorously having ever gone back again, and Jupien, lying either to save their reputations or to avoid competition, would declare, "Oh no, he doesn't come to my place, he wouldn't be willing to." For men of standing it is not so serious, especially as their social equals who do not go to such places do not know what they are like and, anyway, do not inquire into other people's private lives.

I had left Jupien's place at the first signal of alarm. The streets had become entirely dark, except that now and then one of the enemy's aviators, flying rather low, would throw a light on the spot where he wished to drop a bomb. While trying to find my way, I recalled the day when, en route to La Raspelière, I had met a god, as it were, an airplane, which made my horse rear up. This time I thought the en-

counter would be of a different sort and the god of evil would slay me. I hurried to escape, like the traveller overtaken by a tidal wave; I groped about the dark squares, trying to discover an exit. Finally the flames from a building on fire threw light on the scene and I was able to see the way to go, the anti-aircraft guns crackling incessantly the while. But my thoughts had turned to another subject. I was thinking of Jupien's hotel, perhaps now reduced to ashes (for a bomb had fallen in the immediate neighbourhood just after I had left the place)—that building on which M. de Charlus might well have placed the prophetic inscription *Sodoma,* as did some unknown inhabitant of Pompeii with no less foresight, or perhaps after the eruption had begun and when the catastrophe was already under way. But of what importance were siren and Gothas to the men who had come seeking their pleasure? Seldom do we take any note of the social setting or the natural surroundings in which our love affairs are placed. The tempest rages at sea, the ship rolls in every direction, torrents of rain, whipped by the wind, pour down from the sky; we give heed for just an instant—and then only to protect ourselves against some inconvenience it is causing us—to the immense scene in which we and the beloved body we are clasping close are but insignificant atoms. The siren announcing the danger of bombs disturbed the habitués of Jupien's as little as an iceberg would have done. More than that, its menace of physical danger relieved them from the morbid fear that had long been persecuting them. For it is a mistake to think that fears correspond in intensity to the dangers that inspire them. One can be afraid of not being able to sleep and yet not at all afraid of a dangerous duel, afraid of a rat and not of a lion. For some hours the police would be fully occupied with trying to save the lives of the inhabitants of Paris—such an unimportant matter—and would not be liable to involve these gentlemen in a compromising raid.

Some of the habitués were tempted—even more than by this release from fear—by the darkness which had suddenly

come over the streets. Several of these Pompeians, on whom the fire of heaven was already raining down, descended into the passageways of the underground railroad, which were as black as catacombs. They knew, as a matter of fact, that they would not be alone there. Now, the darkness which envelopes everything like a new element produces a result peculiarly tempting for certain people—it does away with the first stage in the process of sexual approach and makes it possible to attain right at the very beginning a degree of intimacy usually reached only after considerable time. And, in truth, whether the coveted one be a woman or a man, even supposing the approach to be simple and free from the flirtatious maneuvering that would drag out interminably in a parlour (at least in the daytime), in the evening, even in the most dimly lighted street, there is a preliminary period when the eyes alone devour the expected feast, when the fear of passers-by and even uncertainty as to the desired one prevents anything more than glances and words. But in the darkness all that "old stuff" is done away with; the hands, the lips, the bodies can come into play right from the start. And, if one is rebuffed, there is always the excuse of the darkness and the mistakes it gives rise to. If, however, one's advances are welcomed, this instant response, the body that does not draw back but comes closer suggests to us that she —or he—whom we are silently courting is without restraint and corrupted with vice, a thought that augments the pleasure of biting right into the forbidden fruit without first looking at it with coveting eyes or even asking permission. Meanwhile the darkness continues. Engulfed in this strange element, Jupien's habitués felt as if they had travelled far and come to witness some natural phenomenon, such as a tidal wave or an eclipse; relishing, in place of the usual prepared and sedentary pleasure, the tang of a chance meeting in the midst of the great unknown, they celebrated secret rites in the darkness of the catacombs, as in some Pompeian place of ill repute, to the accompaniment of the volcanic thunder of the bombs. The Pompeian paintings at Jupien's,

by the way, recalling, as they did, the latter part of the French Revolution, were very appropriate to the period so similar to the Directoire upon which we were then entering. Already anticipating the end of the war, new styles of dancing were being developed everywhere and were being madly indulged in under cover of night, hiding in the darkness in order not to violate the police ordinances too openly. Along with this, certain artistic opinions, less anti-Germanic than during the early years of the war, were becoming current and bringing a breath of air to stifled minds, but a certificate of good citizenship was necessary before one dared give voice to them. A professor wrote a remarkable book on Schiller, which was reviewed in the newspapers; but, before mentioning the book, it was recorded, as a sort of licence to print, that the author was at the Battle of the Marne, at Verdun, that he had been cited for bravery five times and had lost two sons in the war, after which they went on to praise the clarity and penetration of his work on Schiller, whom it was permissible to call "great," provided one said "great Boche," instead of "great German." The same rule held for the article and then it was allowed to pass.

As I drew near my home, I was reflecting how quickly consciousness can cease to play any part in our habits, leaving them free to develop without interference or control, and how astonished we can be to study—simply from the outside and on the supposition that they involve the entire person—the actions of some men whose mental or moral qualities may be developing independently and in quite a different direction. It was evidently a defect in early training, or a lack of any training at all, combined with a penchant for earning money in the least painful way possible or, at any rate, in the least laborious manner—for there must be many kinds of work that are pleasanter, all things considered (but does not the sick man, for example, construct for himself with privations and remedies an existence far more painful than it would be made by the ailment, often slight, against which he imagines he is struggling in this manner?) that had

led the young men before mentioned, quite innocently, so to speak, and for very modest pay, to do things which gave them no pleasure and which at the start must have been most repugnant. Judged by their actions, one might have considered them thoroughly bad, but not only did they prove themselves in the war to be marvellous soldiers, incomparably brave, but in civil life they were frequently good-hearted fellows, if not altogether good citizens. They had long since ceased to judge what was moral or immoral in the life they were leading, because it was the life of everyone around them. In like manner, when we study certain periods of ancient history, we are astonished to see some persons whom we know to have been kind as individuals, take part without scruple in massacres and human sacrifices which probably seemed to them perfectly natural. He who reads the history of our times two thousand years hence will doubtless consider in just the same way that our epoch allowed pure and tender consciences to dwell in an environment to which they adjusted, it is true, but which to him will appear to have been unspeakably pernicious. On the other hand, I did not know a man who was as richly endowed with intelligence and sensibility as Jupien, for that delightful fund of knowledge which constituted the intellectual fabric of his conversation did not come to him from any of that school or university education which might have made a remarkable man of him but from which so many sons of fashionable families get no benefit at all. It was his pure, inborn good sense, his innate good taste which had enabled him, out of occasional random reading in odd moments, without a guide, to develop that correct way of expressing himself in which one found all the symmetries of the language in their full beauty. And yet, the profession he was engaged in, while one of the most lucrative, it is true, could rightly be judged the most ignoble of all. As for M. de Charlus, whatever scorn for gossip his aristocratic pride may have given him, how could his sense of personal dignity and self-respect have failed to deny to his sensual inclinations certain indulgences

the only possible excuse for which would seem to be utter insanity? But in his case, as in Jupien's, the habit of excluding considerations of morality from a whole category of acts (something which, by the way, must occur in other functions as well, such as judge, statesman and many more besides) must have been formed so long before that, without ever consulting his moral sense any longer, it had become more and more strongly developed, until the day when this willing Prometheus had had himself chained by Force to the rock of pure Matter. I realised, of course, that this was a new phase of M. de Charlus's malady, which, since I had become aware of it, judging by the various stages I had witnessed, had gone through its evolution with increasing speed. The poor Baron could not now be very far from the end of it all, death, if, indeed, this was not preceded, in accordance with the prediction and hope of Mme. Verdurin, by an infection which itself at his age could only hasten his demise. And yet perhaps it was inaccurate to say "the rock of pure Matter." On the surface of this matter it is possible that a little intelligence was still discernible. This madman, despite his aberration, was well aware that he was mad, that at such times he was a victim of insanity, since he understood clearly that the lad who beat him was no more to be blamed than little boys playing "soldier" who choose one of their number by lot to be "the Prussian" and they all throw themselves on him in a passion of real patriotism and pretended hate. But in this insanity of which he was a victim there was also an element of M. de Charlus's own peculiar personality. Even in its aberrations, as also in our loves and travels, human nature still betrays the need of faith by its insistence on truth. When I mentioned to Françoise a church in Milan—a city she would probably never visit—or the Cathedral of Rheims, or even that of Arras, which she could not see because they had been more or less destroyed, she would envy the rich, who can treat themselves to the sight of such treasures, and would exclaim, with regretful longing, "Ah, how beautiful that must have been!" And

yet, in all the years she had been living in Paris, she had never had the curiosity to go to see Notre-Dame. That was just because Notre-Dame was part of Paris, of the city in which her daily life unfolded itself and in which, consequently, it was difficult for our old servant to place the objects of her dreams—just as it would have been for me if the study of architecture had not corrected in me some of the instincts I had formed at Combray. In anyone we love there is always present some dream that we cannot always discern but which we constantly seek to attain. It was my faith in Bergotte and Swann which had made me love Gilberte, just as it was my belief in Gilbert the Bad which had made me love Mme. de Guermantes. And what a wide expanse of unfathomable ocean was set apart in my love for Albertine, painful, jealous and individual though that love was! Moreover, just on account of this individual quality which we pursue with such eagerness, our love for someone else is already somewhat of an aberration. And even our physical ailments, at any rate those which affect the nervous system rather closely, are they not in a way special preferences or phobias developed by our organs and our bony structure, which thus discover that they have contracted for certain climates an aversion as tenacious and inexplicable as the fancy some men shew for women who wear eyeglasses or for female circus-riders? The desire that is aroused each time at the sight of a woman circus-rider, who will ever say with what persistent, unconscious dream it is connected, as unconscious and mysterious, for example, as is the influence which one who has suffered all his life from asthmatic attacks may suddenly feel in some city, apparently the same as all the others, but where for the first time he breathes freely?

Now, aberrations are like love affairs in which the morbid condition has spread and affected the entire being. Even in the maddest of them, the underlying love can still be discerned. At the bottom of M. de Charlus's insistence that they put chains of tested strength on his wrists and ankles

and attach him to an iron bar—with other ferocious devices which Jupien told me they had the greatest difficulty in obtaining even with the aid of sailors, for they were used to inflict punishments which custom has abolished even where discipline is the harshest, namely, on shipboard—at the bottom of that was to be found M. de Charlus's dream of a virility proven by brutal tests, if need be, and all the rich store of medieval scenes, crucifixions and feudal tortures which his imagination treasured, invisible to us, but reflecting themselves in his acts, as we have seen. It was in the same spirit that he would say to Jupien each time he arrived, "There isn't going to be any alarm this evening, anyhow, for I can just imagine how I would look burnt to a crisp by that fire from heaven, like an inhabitant of Sodom!" And he pretended to dread the Gothas, not because he really felt the slightest fear of them, but in order to have an excuse, the moment the sirens sounded, to hurry down into the underground stations, where he hoped to get some pleasure from passing contacts in the dark, with vague dreams of the dungeons and subterranean chambers of the middle ages. In short, his desire to be chained up and beaten, for all its ugliness, betrayed in him a dream as poetic as does in other persons the desire to go to Venice or to keep a chorus girl as a mistress. And M. de Charlus was so determined that this dream should give him the illusion of reality that Jupien had had to sell the wooden bed that was in Room 14A * and put in its place an iron bed, which harmonised better with the chains.

The *berloque* finally sounded just as I was reaching the house. It was like an urchin's commentary on the noise of the firemen. I met Françoise just coming up out of the cellar with the butler. She thought I was dead. She told me Saint-Loup had come in for a moment, with apologies, to see if he had dropped his *croix de guerre* during the visit he had made me that morning, for he had just noticed that he had lost it and, as he was to rejoin his regiment the next

* The French text reads "43."—*F.A.B.*

morning, he wanted at any cost to see if it was at my house. He had searched everywhere, with the help of Françoise, but had not found it. Françoise was sure he must have lost it before coming to see me, for, she said, it seemed to her—in fact, she would have sworn he did not have it on when she saw him. In which she was mistaken. This shews the value of testimony and of recollections. I may add that I sensed at once, from the unenthusiastic way they spoke of him, that Saint-Loup had made a rather poor impression on Françoise and the butler. It is quite true that, whereas the butler's son and Françoise's nephew had done everything possible to evade military service, Saint-Loup had made every possible effort, and with success, to be detailed where the danger was greatest. But Françoise and the butler could not believe that, judging him by themselves. They were convinced that the rich always get under cover. Besides, even if they had known the truth about Robert's heroic courage, they would not have been moved by it. He did not use the word "Boches," he had once spoken to them admiringly of the bravery of the Germans, he did not attribute it to treachery that we had not been victorious the very first day. That, now, is what they would have liked to hear; that would have seemed to them an indication of courage. So, though they were continuing to hunt for the *croix de guerre,* I, who suspected where it had probably been lost, found them cool on the subject of Robert. But, if it was true that he had that evening indulged in the form of pleasure I supposed, it was only a temporary stop-gap, for, taken with a desire to see Morel again, he had made use of all his connexions to find out in which corps he was serving—thinking he had enlisted—so that he might go to see him, but thus far he had received only hundreds of contradictory replies. I advised Françoise and the butler to go to bed. But the latter was never in a hurry to leave Françoise, now that he had found, thanks to the war, a more effective way to torment her than by mentioning the expulsion of the nuns and the Dreyfus case. That evening and every time I went near

them during the few days more that I remained in Paris, I heard the butler saying to the terrified Françoise, "They're in no hurry, it's easy to see why; they're waiting till the pear's ripe; but, when it is, they'll take Paris, and that day there'll be no mercy shewn!" "Oh, Lord God and the Virgin Mary!" Françoise cried out, "they're not satisfied with having conquered poor Belgium. She suffered good and plenty when she was invasioned." "Belgium, Françoise! Why, what they did to Belgium isn't a circumstance to what they'll do here." And even the war having introduced into the conversation of the common people a quantity of expressions which they knew only by sight, through the newspapers, the pronunciation of which, consequently, they did not know, he added, "You'll see, Françoise, they're preparing to break through at the Saint-Mihiel 'sallient'." At this I revolted, if not out of pity for Françoise and in the name of military common sense, at least in behalf of the French language, and I declared that the word should be pronounced "salient," but all I accomplished was to cause the terrifying remark to be repeated to Françoise every time I entered the kitchen, for the butler not only enjoyed frightening his fellow servant, but was almost as glad to shew his master that, though formerly a mere gardener in Combray and now just a butler—but a real Frenchman notwithstanding, according to the rule of Saint-André-des-Champs—the Declaration of the Rights of Man gave him the right to pronounce it "sallient" in complete independence and not take any orders on a point which was not part of his duties and on which, consequently, since the French Revolution no one had any business to say anything to him, he being my equal. So I had the mortification of hearing him talk to Françoise about the Saint-Mihiel "sallient" with an insistence which was intended to shew me that this pronunciation was not the result of ignorance, but of a carefully considered determination. He combined the government and the newspapers in one general distrustful "they," saying, for example, "They talk to us about the losses of the Boches, but they don't say

anything about our own, which, it seems, are ten times as heavy. They tell us the other fellows are at the end of their rope and that they have nothing left to eat, but as for me, I believe they have a hundred times as much as we have. Anyhow, it isn't right to pull the wool over our eyes. If they had nothing to eat, they wouldn't fight the way they did the other day, when they killed a hundred thousand of our boys under twenty." He constantly exaggerated the German victories in this way, just as he used to do with the successes of the radicals; at the same time he would tell of their atrocities, in order that these victories might be more painful to Françoise, who kept crying out, "Ah, Holy Mother of the Angels! Ah, Mary, Mother of God!" And sometimes, to annoy her in another way, he would say, "For that matter, we're no better than they are. What we're doing in Greece is no prettier than what they did in Belgium. You'll see that we're going to get everybody against us and we'll have to fight all the other nations"—when it was exactly the opposite. The days when the news was good, he got his revenge by assuring her the war would go on for thirty-five years and, to provide for the possibility of peace, he insisted that this would not last more than a few months and would be followed by battles compared with which those we were then having would be only child's play, and that afterwards there would be nothing left of France. The victory of the Allies seemed at that time, if not very near, at any rate almost certain and it must unfortunately be admitted that the butler was disconsolate over this. For, having reduced the World War, as he did everything else, to the underhand war he was carrying on against Françoise (whom he was, however, very fond of, just as one can be attached to a person whom one nevertheless enjoys exasperating every day by defeating him at dominoes) victory presented itself to his eyes under the guise of the first conversation, in which he would have the sorrow of hearing Françoise say to him, "It's over at last and they're going to have to give us more than we gave them in 1870." Moreover, he thought all

along that this inevitable culmination was about to arrive, for an unconscious patriotism made him believe, along with the entire French people, victims of the same mirage as I was since the beginning of my illness, that victory, like my recovery, would come the following day. He anticipated this by announcing to Françoise that this victory might possibly come about but that it would make her heart bleed because it would be followed by the Revolution and then the invasion. "Oh, this damned war! The Boches will be the only ones to get over it quickly, Françoise; they have already made hundreds of millions out of it. But to imagine they will cough up a penny to us, what a joke! Perhaps they'll say so in the newspapers," he added as a precaution, to provide against any contingency, "to calm the people, just as they have been telling us for the past three years that the war was going to end the following day. I can't understand how people are such fools as to believe it." Françoise was all the more disturbed by these remarks because, as a matter of fact, after having believed the optimists instead of the butler, she saw that the war, which she had expected would be over in two weeks, in spite of "poor Belgium" being "invasioned," was still going on and that nobody was advancing because of the permanent digging in on each side—a phenomenon the meaning of which she did not grasp—and finally because one of the countless "godsons" to whom she gave all she earned with us told her that one fact and another had been withheld from the public. "This will all fall on the workingman's back," the butler concluded. "They will take your field away from you, Françoise." "Oh Lord!" exclaimed Françoise. But instead of these far-away misfortunes, he preferred more imminent ones and he devoured the newspapers, in the hope of being able to report a defeat to Françoise. He would hunt for bad news as for Easter eggs, hoping that things would go badly enough to frighten Françoise but not badly enough to make him suffer materially. Thus a Zeppelin raid, for example, would have delighted him with the spectacle of Françoise hiding in

the cellar and because he was convinced that, in a city the size of Paris, the bombs would not come and fall precisely on our house. Françoise, to tell the truth, was beginning to relapse at times into the pacifism she shewed at Combray. She almost doubted the truth of "German atrocities." "At the beginning of the war," she remarked, "they told us the Germans were murderers, brigands, real bandits—Bbboches, in short." If she put several *b's* before "Boches," it was because the accusation that the Germans were murderers seemed quite plausible to her, but the charge that they were "Boches" was so overwhelming that it was almost incredible. It was rather difficult, however, to understand what mysteriously frightful meaning she assigned to the word "Boche," because she was speaking of the beginning of the war and also on account of the air of uncertainty with which she uttered the word. For the doubt whether the Germans were criminals, even though it might be ill-founded in fact, did not contain within itself any contradiction from the point of view of logic; but how could one doubt that they were Boches, since this word in popular language means precisely "Germans." Perhaps she was merely reproducing in another form the violent remarks she had heard early in the war, in which the word "Boche" was stressed with special force. "I used to believe all that," she said, "but I'm beginning to wonder if we aren't as big a lot of rascals as they." The seed of this blasphemous thought had been slyly sown in her mind by the butler, who, seeing that she had a soft spot in her heart for King Constantine of Greece, kept picturing him to her as being deprived of food by France in order to make him give up. In consequence of this, his abdication had moved her deeply, so that she even went so far as to say, "We're no better than they; if we were in Germany, we'd be doing just the same." I saw very little of her anyhow those last few days, for she went often to visit those cousins about whom my mother once said to me, "But you know, they are richer than you." We witnessed at this period something so fine, so common throughout the coun-

try, that it would serve, if there were a historian to perpetuate the memory of it, as lasting evidence of the greatness of France, of her greatness of soul, of her greatness according to the standard of Saint-André-des-Champs, a greatness shewn in their lives by many civilians behind the lines, no less than by the soldiers who fell at the Marne. One of Françoise's nephews, who was killed at Berry-au-Bac, was the nephew also of those millionaire cousins of Françoise, former café owners who had made their fortune and retired a long time before. The nephew, also a café proprietor, but in a small way and with very limited means, had been drafted at the age of twenty-five and had left his young wife alone to run the little bar which he expected to come back to in a few months. But he was killed. And then this is what we saw. The millionaire cousins, who were no relation to the young widow, left the country place to which they had retired ten years before and went to work again in the café business, but refused to accept a sou for their labour; at six o'clock every morning, the millionaire wife, a real lady, and her young lady daughter were dressed and ready to help their niece-in-law and cousin-by-marriage. And for more than three years, they had been rinsing glasses in this way and serving drinks from early morning till half-past nine at night, without a single day of rest. In this book of mine, in which there is not one fact that is not imaginary, nor any real person concealed under a false name, where everything has been invented by me to meet the needs of my story, I ought to say in praise of my country that, at any rate, these millionaire relatives of Françoise, who gave up their retired life in order to help their niece when she was left without support, are people who really are alive and, convinced that their modesty will not take offence because they will never read this book, it gives me a childlike pleasure and deep emotion to record here their real name, Larivière—a truly French name, moreover—regretting only that I cannot give the names of thousands of others who must have acted in a similar manner and through whom France survived. If

there were some miserable slackers like the lordly young man in dinner jacket whom I saw at Jupien's, whose sole concern was to know whether he could have Léon at half-past ten "because he was lunching downtown," they are compensated for by the countless thousands of Frenchmen of Saint-André-des-Champs and by all the magnificent soldiers, to whom I liken the Larivière family. To heighten Françoise's anxiety, the butler would shew her old numbers of *Lectures pour Tous,* dating from before the war, which he had found and which shewed on their covers "The German Imperial Family." "There's our future lord and master," he would say to Françoise, pointing to "Guillaume." She would stare open-eyed, then turn to the female figure beside the Emperor and say, "And there's Guillaumesse."

My departure from Paris was delayed by news which grieved me so profoundly that I was for some time quite unable to undertake any journey. What occurred was that I learned of the death of Robert de Saint-Loup, killed the second day after his return to the front, while covering the retreat of his men. He was as far removed as any man from harbouring hatred for an entire nation—and as for Emperor William, he believed, for special reasons which, perhaps, were false, that he had rather sought to prevent the war than to bring it on. And he had no hatred for Germanism, either; the last words I had heard him utter, six days before, were those which begin one of Schumann's songs; he sang them to me softly on my stairway in German and I even had to stop him because of the neighbours. Trained by his very fine upbringing to eliminate from his behaviour any apology or invective and all bombast, he had scorned, in the face of the enemy as also at the time of mobilisation, to have recourse to conduct which might have saved his life, and he did this by that self-effacement which was represented in all his actions, including his way of accompanying me to the street bareheaded and closing the door of my carriage for me whenever I had been to see him. For several days I shut myself up in my room, thinking about him. I recalled his arrival

that first time at Balbec, when, dressed in almost pure white flannels, with those eyes of his, the colour of the sea and quite as restless, he strode across the hall adjoining the large dining-room, the wide windows of which looked out on the sea. I remembered what a strange being he had then appeared to me and how greatly I had desired to become his friend. This wish had been realised beyond anything I could have expected, but had given me scarcely any pleasure at the time; later I had come to appreciate all the fine qualities and other things besides which lay hidden beneath that strikingly distinguished appearance. All of that, the good as well as the bad, he had given out lavishly every day and the last day, as he went to the attack of a German trench—had given it out through generosity, through a desire to put everything he possessed at the service of others, just as that evening when he clambered over the benches in the restaurant in order not to disturb me. And the very fact that I had after all seen him so seldom and in such varied settings, under such different circumstances and at such long intervals—in that hall at Balbec, at the café in Rivebelle, at the cavalry barracks and the military dinners at Doncières, at the theatre the night he slapped a journalist's face, in the home of the Princesse de Guermantes—only served to give me more clear-cut and striking pictures of his life and a more sharply defined sorrow over his death than we often have at the loss of someone we have loved more but with whom we have been so constantly associated that the mental picture we retain of him has become merely a sort of hazy composite of an infinite number of pictures imperceptibly different—also, our affection having had full expression, we do not nurse the illusion that we might have known a richer relationship, had not circumstances thwarted us, as we feel in the case of those whom we have seen only for brief moments and at meetings which were cut all too short, through no fault of theirs or ours. Soon after that first day, when I saw Saint-Loup pursuing his monocle and thought him so lordly as he strode across the hall at Balbec, there had come into my life an-

other living figure which I espied for the first time on the beach at Balbec and which also now lived only as a memory —Albertine, treading the sands that first evening, indifferent to everyone, as truly part of the sea as the gulls. So swiftly had I fallen in love with her that, for the sake of going out with her every day, I had never gone to see Saint-Loup from Balbec. And yet the history of my relations with him bore evidence also that at one time I had ceased to love her, for, when I went to take up my abode for a while at Doncières, near Robert, I did so because I was unhappy to see that my feeling for Mme. de Guermantes was not requited. His life and Albertine's, which I had come in touch with so late, both at Balbec, and which had both come to such an early end, had crossed at scarcely any points. "It was he I sent to Mme. Bontemps when Albertine had left me," I repeated to myself, watching how the nimble shuttles of the years weave threads between memories that seemed most unrelated. Then, too, I reflected, each of their lives had its secret, both of like nature, which I had not suspected. In Saint-Loup's case this now caused me perhaps the greater sorrow, since Albertine's life had become so remote from mine. But I could not console myself that either of these two lives should have been so short. Each of them had been wont to say, as they took care of me, "You're the sick one." And now it was they who had died and I could evoke, with such a short interval between them, after all, the earliest and the last recollections I had of them both,— he before the German trench and she after her fall, my first memory of her having a value for me now only because it formed part of the mental picture of the sun setting over the sea. Françoise shewed more compassion over Saint-Loup's death than she had over Albertine's. She at once assumed her rôle of mourner and meditated aloud on the memory of the dead man with lamentations and despairing comments. She made a display of her grief and it was only when I looked up that she put on a stolid expression and turned away, so as to appear not to have seen my face. For,

like many neurotics, emotional stress in others was unbearable to her, doubtless because it was too like her own. She now liked to call attention to the slightest crick in her neck or a little dizziness or that she had bruised herself. But if I mentioned any of my own ailments, she immediately became stern and stoical again and pretended not to have heard me. "Poor Marquis!" she would say, although she could not help believing he would have moved heaven and earth to avoid going to war or, once in the army, to get out of the way of danger. "Poor woman!" she would say, thinking of Mme. de Marsantes, "how she must have cried when she heard of her son's death! Now if only she could have seen him—but perhaps it's better she couldn't, for his nose was cut in two and his face was shot away." And her eyes would fill with tears, but through them there gleamed the cruel curiosity of the peasant. Without a doubt Françoise sympathised deeply with Mme. de Marsantes in her sorrow, but she was vexed not to know the form that this sorrow had taken or to be able to treat herself to a view of it. And, as she would have liked to weep and to have me see her weep, she tried to get herself into the mood for it by saying, "It makes me feel very sad." And she watched for signs of grief on my face, too, with an eagerness which made me affect a certain hardness when I spoke of Robert. And doubtless more through a spirit of imitation and because she had heard it said (for there are stereotyped formulas in the pantry as well as in literary circles) she would repeat, but not without putting into it the intonation of a poor person's satisfaction, "All his money did not save him from dying just like anybody else, and now what good is it to him?" The butler took the opportunity to say to her that it was, indeed, sad, but that it was of little importance as compared with the millions of men who were dying every day, notwithstanding all the efforts the government was making to hide the fact. But this time he did not succeed in augmenting her grief, as he had expected, for she replied, "It is true they, too, are dying for France, but they are

unknown; it's always more interesting when it's somebody you know." And, as she enjoyed shedding tears, she added, "You must be sure to let me know if they speak of the Marquis's death in the paper."

Robert had often said to me sadly long before the war, "My life? Oh, let's not talk about it; I'm a doomed man already." Was he alluding to the weakness he had thus far succeeded in hiding from the world, but of which he was himself aware and the seriousness of which perhaps he exaggerated, just as children who have intercourse for the first time or, even before that, seek solitary gratification, imagine that they are like a plant that scatters its pollen, only to die immediately thereafter? And perhaps with Saint-Loup, just as with the children, this exaggeration came not only from the yet unfamiliar idea of sin, but also from the fact that a new and strange sensation has at first an almost terrifying force, which lessens as time goes on. Or was it that he had a presentiment of his untimely end, basing it, if necessary, on the death of his father, who had died quite young? Such a presentiment doubtless seems impossible. And yet death appears to be subject to certain laws. One would often think, for example, that persons born of parents who lived to an old age or died very young were almost forced to die at the same age, the former dragging along their griefs and their incurable ailments to their hundredth year and the latter, despite a happy and healthful life, being carried off at the inevitable premature date by some malady so timely and so fortuitous (whatever deep roots it may have had in their constitution) that it seems like a formality necessary to the accomplishment of their death. And might it not be possible that even accidental death—like that of Saint-Loup, which was, be it remembered, linked up with his character in more ways, perhaps, than I have thought I should mention—has likewise been recorded in advance, known only to the gods, invisible to men, but which a peculiar melancholy, half-conscious, half-unconscious (and, even in its conscious phase, expressed to others

with that complete sincerity with which one announces in advance misfortunes which, in one's inner consciousness, one fully expects to escape, but which are none the less going to happen) reveals to him who bears it within himself and is always conscious of it, like a family motto or a predestined date?

He must have been very handsome in those last hours, he who in this life, whether sitting or striding about in a salon, had always seemed to be holding in check the dashing spirit of a charge, concealing under a smile the indomitable will that was lodged in his triangular-shaped head—at last he had charged. Cleared of its books, the feudal turret had become military once more. And this Guermantes had died more like his true self, or, rather, more like his race, in which he was now only a Guermantes, as was symbolically indicated at his funeral in the church of Saint-Hilaire at Combray, all draped with black hangings, on which stood out in red, under the closed coronet, without initials, first name or title, the "G" of the Guermantes which by his death he had once more become. Before going to this burial, which did not take place at once, I wrote to Gilberte. Perhaps I should have written to the Duchesse de Guermantes, but I said to myself that she would accept Robert's death with the same indifference as I had seen her shew in the case of many others who had seemed to be so closely associated with her life, and that, with her Guermantes spirit, she might even seek to shew that she did not share the superstition of blood relationship. I was too ill to write to everyone. I had formerly believed that she and Robert were fond of one another in the sense in which that expression is used in society, that is to say that, when they were together, they would say affectionate things to one another, which they really felt at the moment. But away from her, Robert did not hesitate to call her an old fool, and, on her side, if it sometimes gave her a selfish pleasure to see him, I had known her to be incapable of going to the least trouble or using her influence to the slightest extent in order to do him

a favour or even to save him from something unfortunate. The ill will she had exhibited toward him in refusing to recommend him to General de Saint-Joseph when he was about to return to Morocco proved that the devotion she manifested for him later, at the time of his marriage, had been only a sort of compensation, which had not cost her dearly. I was, therefore, greatly surprised to learn that, on account of her being ill at the time Robert was killed, they had thought it necessary to keep the papers from her for several days, under the flimsiest pretexts, in order to spare her the shock of the news of his death. But my surprise was still greater when I learned that, after they had finally been obliged to tell her the truth, the Duchess wept for an entire day, was taken ill and did not recover her composure for a long time—more than a week, which was quite a while for her. When I heard of her grief, I was touched by it, and it makes it possible for everyone to say, and I can likewise affirm, that there existed between them a strong friendship. But, when I recall how many mean little remarks and how much unwillingness to render service it still permitted, I realise how little a "strong friendship" amounts to in the fashionable world. But a little later, in a situation of greater historical importance, even though it did not come so close to my heart, Mme. de Guermantes, in my opinion, shewed herself in a still more favourable light. She who, it may be remembered, as a young girl had displayed such impertinent audacity toward the imperial family of Russia and after her marriage had always spoken of them with a freedom of language which sometimes caused her to be accused of lack of tact, was perhaps the only person after the Russian Revolution to shew unlimited devotion to the Grand Dukes and Duchesses. Only the year before the outbreak of the war, she had greatly incensed the Grand Duchess Vladimir by always speaking of the Comtesse de Hohenfelsen, morganatic wife of Grand Duke Paul, as "Grand Duchess Paul." Notwithstanding which, the Russian Revolution had no sooner broken out than our ambas-

sador in Petrograd, M. Paléologue ("Paléo" to the diplomatic world, which, quite as truly as the fashionable world, has its supposedly clever abbreviations) was harassed with telegrams from the Duchesse de Guermantes, asking for news of the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. And for a considerable time the sole marks of sympathy and respect which that princess received came to her, exclusively and unremittingly, from Mme. de Guermantes.

If not by his death, at least by certain things he had done in the weeks just preceding it, Saint-Loup caused sorrow greater than that of the Duchess. For one thing, the day after that evening when I met M. de Charlus, and the very same day when the Baron had said to Morel, "I will have my revenge," Saint-Loup's efforts to get track of Morel had brought some results—this result, at least, that the general under whose command Morel should have been became aware of the fact that he was a deserter, had him searched for and arrested and then wrote to Saint-Loup as an interested person, to explain, with due regrets, the punishment that was going to be imposed on his friend. Morel had no doubt that his arrest had been instigated by the rancour of M. de Charlus. He remembered the words, "I will have my revenge" and, thinking that this was that revenge, he asked to be allowed to reveal some interesting facts. "It is true I deserted," he admitted, "but if I was influenced to do wrong, was it entirely my fault?" He then disclosed some things about M. de Charlus and M. d'Argencourt (with whom also he was at odds) which did not concern him directly, to tell the truth, but which they, with the doubly unreserved nature of a lover and an invert, had confided to him. These revelations resulted in the arrest of both those gentlemen. The arrest caused them perhaps less distress than the discovery that they each had a rival in the other, and the investigation brought to light many other rivals, but obscure persons, picked up daily in the streets. Moreover, the Baron and M. d'Argencourt were soon released, as was also Morel, because the letter which the

general had written to Saint-Loup came back to him with the inscription "Dead on the field of honour," and the general, out of respect for the deceased, saw to it that Morel was merely sent up to the front. There the latter behaved bravely, came safely through every danger and returned at the close of the war with the *croix de guerre* which M. de Charlus once had tried in vain to obtain for him and which he owed indirectly to the death of Saint-Loup. I have often thought since then, recalling that *croix de guerre* found on the floor at Jupien's, that if Saint-Loup had lived, he could easily have gotten himself elected deputy after the war, thanks to the froth of stupidity and the blaze of glory which it left in its wake, when the loss of a finger, wiping out centuries of social tradition, allowed a man to marry brilliantly into an aristocratic family, and in similar manner the *croix de guerre,* even won in an office, took the place of a declaration of principles to win election to the Chamber of Deputies, almost to the French Academy. The election of Saint-Loup, because of his "holy" family, would have caused M. Arthur Meyer to shed buckets of tears and spill quarts of ink. But perhaps Robert was too sincerely attached to the people to succeed in winning their support, although they would doubtless have forgiven him his democratic ideas in view of his noble lineage. Saint-Loup would, no doubt, have defended his ideas successfully before a Chamber made up of aviators; those heroes would certainly have understood him, as would also a few very rare noble spirits. But, thanks to the sedative influence of the *Bloc National,* the old dregs of political life, who are always reëlected, were trotted out. Those of them who could not enter a Chamber of aviators at least solicited, for admission to the French Academy, the votes of the Marshals, of a President of the Republic, a President of the Chamber and so on. They would not have approved of Saint-Loup, but they did endorse another habitué of Jupien's, that deputy of *l'Action Libérale,* who was reëlected without opposition. He continued to wear his uniform of officer of territorial

troops, although the war had been over for a long time. His election was hailed with joy by all the newspapers that had joined the coalition in support of his candidacy and by the rich noblewomen, who now dressed in old rags, through a feeling for the proprieties and also through fear of taxes, while the men on the Stock Exchange bought diamonds uninterruptedly, not for their wives, but because they had lost confidence in the credit of any country and therefore took refuge in this tangible form of wealth. This made De Beers stock go up a thousand francs. All this stupidity was somewhat exasperating, but one was less vexed with the *Bloc National* when one suddenly saw the victims of bolshevism, Grand Duchesses in rags and tatters, whose husbands and then their sons, had been assassinated, the husbands in wheelbarrows and the sons stoned to death, after first having been left without food, then forced to work amid hoots and jeers and finally thrown into wells and stoned because it was believed they had the plague and might infect others. Those who succeeded in escaping turned up in Paris all of a sudden and added new and terrifying details to this picture of horror.

CHAPTER III

The Princesse de Guermantes Receives

THE new sanitarium to which I retired at that time did not cure me any more than had the first and a long time elapsed before I left it. During the railway journey back to Paris, I fell to thinking of my lack of literary talent which I had early suspected along the Guermantes way, and had recognised with still more sadness on my daily walks with Gilberte at Tansonville before going home to dinner very late in the night, and which, the evening before leaving that country estate, while reading some pages from the journal of the Goncourt brothers, I had very largely attributed to the vanity and falseness of literature. This idea, less painful perhaps but still more dispiriting if I explained it, not by a deficiency peculiar to me personally, but as due to the non-existence of the ideal in which I had formerly believed, had not recurred to me for a long time past, but now it struck me anew and with more crushing force than ever before. I recall that it was while the train had halted out in the open country. The declining sun shone halfway down the trunks of the trees that lined the railway track. "Trees," thought I to myself, "you have nothing more to say to me; my deadened heart no longer hears you. Behold me in the midst of nature's beauty and yet it is with indifference and ennui that my eyes take note of the line that separates the sun-bathed foliage from the shadowed trunk. If there was once a time when I was able to believe myself a poet, I now know that I am not. In the new chapter of my now arid life which is opening before me, perhaps men might be able to give me the inspiration I no longer find in nature. But the days when I might possibly have been able to sing her praises will return no more." And yet, even as I offered myself the consolation of this

possible study of human beings taking the place of the departed inspiration of nature, I knew that I was merely offering myself a consolation which I knew had no value. If I really had the soul of an artist, what pleasure would I not derive from the sight of that curtain of trees lighted by the declining sun, and in those little flowers growing along the roadbed and raising their heads almost to the step of the railway carriage, so near that I could count their petals, but I shall take good heed not to describe their colour, for who can hope to convey to another a pleasure he has not himself felt? A little later it was with the same indifference that I noted the gold and orange disks with which the same setting sun riddled the windows of a house; and finally, as the hour advanced, I saw another house which seemed constructed of some material of a strange rosy pink. But I made these various observations with the same complete indifference with which, as I strolled with some lady in a garden, I might have noticed a leaf of glass and, a few steps further on, some object made of a substance similar to alabaster, the unaccustomed colour of which would not have roused me from the most languorous ennui; at most, out of politeness toward the lady and in order to say something and to shew that I had remarked the colour, I might have called attention, as we passed by, to the coloured glass and the bit of stucco. In the same way and only to clear my conscience, I pointed out to myself—as though to someone who was accompanying me and who could get more pleasure from it than I—the reflexions of fire on the windowpanes and the rosy transparence of the house. But the companion whose attention I had drawn to these curious effects must have been of a less enthusiastic disposition than many responsive folk who are enraptured by such sights, for he had taken note of those colours without the slightest joy.

My long absence from Paris had not prevented old friends from keeping me on their lists and continuing faithfully to send me invitations and, when I found at home one for a luncheon to be given by Berma in honour of her daughter

and her son-in-law and another for an afternoon reception the following day at the home of the Prince de Guermantes, the gloomy reflexions I had indulged in on the train were not among the least important reasons which counselled me to attend the latter. "It really was not worth while to deprive myself of social life," I reflected, "since the famous literary work which I have so long hoped each day that I might be able to start the following day, I am no longer—perhaps never was—capable of accomplishing—it may even be that it does not correspond to any reality." To tell the truth, this reason was a wholly negative one and merely served to counteract the force of any reasons which might have kept me from attending this fashionable concert. But the reason which determined me to go there was that name "Guermantes," which had been long enough out of my thoughts so that, when I read it on the invitation, it kindled a spark of attention, brought up from the depths of my memory a cross section of the past associated with that name, together with all the accompanying mental pictures of manorial forests or tall flowers, and it once more assumed the charm and significance it used to have for me in Combray when, passing through the Rue de l'Oiseau before I went home, I used to see, looking like dull black lacquer, the outer side of the stained-glass window of Gilbert the Bad, Lord of Guermantes. For just a moment the Guermantes again seemed to me different from ordinary society folk, incomparably above them or any other living person, even a sovereign, like beings issued from the cross-breeding of the sharp, austere air of that sombre town of Combray, where I had spent my childhood, with the past that one caught a glimpse of in that little street at the height of the stained-glass window. I felt a strong desire to go to the Guermantes', as though that would surely carry me back toward my childhood and the depths of my memory where I saw it mirrored. And I continued to read over the invitation, until the letters which made up that name, so familiar and yet so mysterious, like the very name of Combray itself,

rebelled, declared their independence and seemed to outline before my weary eyes a name that was strange to me.

As Mamma happened luckily to be going to a small tea at Mme. Sazerat's, I felt no compunctions about attending the Princesse de Guermantes' reception. I took a carriage to go there, for the Prince de Guermantes no longer occupied his former mansion, but had built himself a magnificent dwelling on the Avenue du Bois. It is one of the mistakes of society folk not to understand that, if they wish us to believe in them, they should first believe in themselves—or, at least, respect the essential elements of our faith. At the time when I believed, even if I knew the contrary, that the Guermantes inhabited a certain palace by virtue of an hereditary right, to gain admittance to the palace of the magician or the fairy, to utter the magic formula which alone could cause the doors to open for me, this seemed to me as arduous an undertaking as to obtain an audience with the magician himself or the fairy. Nothing was easier than to persuade myself that the old manservant (engaged only the night before or supplied by Potel & Chabot) was the son, grandson and descendant of those who had served the family since long before the Revolution; and I had an unlimited willingness to regard as an ancestor's portrait the picture purchased at Bernheim's a month before. But such a spell cannot be carried over into another setting; memories cannot be divided into sections; and there was little left of the Prince de Guermantes, now that he had punctured my illusions by going to live on the Avenue du Bois. The ceilings which I had feared would fall when my name was announced and beneath which there would still have floated for me much of the charm and awe of former times, now looked down on the soirées of an American woman of no interest whatever to me. Of course things have no power in themselves and since it is we who impart it to them, some young middle-class stripling was probably at that very moment experiencing before the palatial mansion of the Avenue du Bois the same feelings that I used to have before the former residence of the

Prince de Guermantes. That was because he was still at the age when one has faith, but I had passed beyond it and had lost that faculty, just as one loses, after the first years, the ability children have to separate the milk they drink into digestible portions, so that adults are forced to take their milk prudently in small quantities, whereas infants can take it at the breast indefinitely, without stopping to catch their breath. But the Prince de Guermantes' change of residence had at least this good result for me, that the carriage which came for me and in which I indulged in these reflexions had to pass through the streets leading to the Champs-Élysées. They were very badly paved at that time, but from the very moment we entered them, I was nevertheless recalled from my deep thought by a sensation of extreme smoothness; the carriage suddenly seemed to run more easily, more softly and noiselessly, as when the gates of an estate open and you glide over roads covered with fine sand or fallen leaves. Nothing of the sort had actually occurred, but I felt all at once the removal of external obstacles, as though I no longer had to make any effort of adjustment or attention, as we do even unconsciously when we come in contact with new objects; the streets through which I was passing were those long-forgotten paths I formerly used to follow when going with Françoise to the Champs-Élysées. The soil knew of itself where it was to go; its resistance was overcome. And, like an aviator who has been laboriously rolling along the ground and then suddenly takes off, I rose slowly toward the silent heights of memories past. In all Paris, those streets will always stand out for me as of a different substance from the others. When I reached the corner of the Rue Royale, where there used to be the open-air stall of photographs that Françoise was so fond of, it seemed as though the carriage, guided by my habit of turning that corner so many times, could not possibly do otherwise than turn of its own accord. I was not passing through the same streets as the strollers who were abroad that day, but through a past that glided softly,

sad and sweet. It was, moreover, made up of so many different pasts that I scarce could determine the reason for my melancholy, whether it was due to my walks to meet Gilberte, haunted with the fear that she might not come, or to the proximity of a certain house where I was once told that Albertine had gone with Andrée, or to the philosophical significance that seems to attach to a path one has followed a thousand times with a fruitless and now extinct passion, as on my hurried, feverish trips after luncheon to scan the damp, freshly posted playbills announcing *Phèdre* or *Le Domino Noir*. Reaching the Champs-Élysées and not being very desirous of listening to the entire concert to be given at the Guermantes', I stopped my carriage and was going to get out and walk about a bit, when my attention was caught by the sight of another carriage which was likewise drawing up. In it a man with staring eyes and bent shoulders was sitting, or, rather, was placed and was making a great effort to sit up straight, like a child who has been told to behave properly. Beneath his straw hat there shewed a wild forest of snow-white hair, while from his chin there flowed a white beard, like the beards of snow on the statues of river gods in the public gardens. It was M. de Charlus, with Jupien at his side, full of attentions for him. He was recovering from a stroke of apoplexy that I had not known about (they had merely told me he had lost his sight, whereas it had been only a passing disturbance, for he had entirely recovered the use of his eyes). It may be that he had up till then dyed his hair and now had been ordered to avoid the fatigue involved, but it seemed rather as if his illness, acting like a chemical precipitant, had rendered glisteningly visible all the metal saturating the strands of his hair and beard, which flung it into the air in geysers of pure silver, giving to the dethroned, aged prince the Shakespearean majesty of a King Lear. His eyes had not escaped this total convulsion, this metallurgical transformation of his head. But, by a contrary phenomenon, they had lost all their brilliance, and the most pathetic part of

it was that one felt instinctively that this lost brilliance represented his self-respecting pride, so that the physical and even the mental consciousness of M. de Charlus were outliving the aristocratic dignity with which they had seemed to form an inseparable whole. As an instance—at that very moment Mme. de Sainte-Euverte, whom the Baron formerly had not considered stylish enough for him, drove by in her victoria, doubtless on her way likewise to the Guermantes'. Jupien, who took care of M. de Charlus like a child, whispered in his ear that it was an acquaintance of his, "Mme. de Sainte-Euverte." And straightway, with great effort and with the determination of a sick person who wants to shew that he is now able to make any movements, although they are still difficult, M. de Charlus raised his hat, bowed and saluted Mme. de Sainte-Euverte with as much respect as if she had been the Queen of France. Perhaps, since sick people, like kings, tend to overdo politeness, the very difficulty M. de Charlus experienced in rendering this salute was one of his reasons for doing it, knowing that an act that was painful for a sick person was all the more affecting and doubly meritorious on his part, as well as doubly flattering for the person to whom it was addressed. Perhaps, also, there was in the Baron's movements that muscular inability to coördinate which accompanies disturbances of the brain and spinal column, so that his gestures may have been more effusive than he intended. But I preferred to see in this an almost physical gentleness, a sort of detachment from the realities of life, which is so striking in those over whom death has already cast its shadow. The coming to the surface of the silvery deposits in the Baron's hair and beard represented a change less profound than did this unconscious implication of social inferiority which, reversing all the conventional relationships, humbled before Mme. de Sainte-Euverte a snobbish nature that had seemed to be of the haughtiest, and would even—thereby shewing how instable that superior attitude is—have humbled it before the tawdriest of American women, who would at last have been

able to treat herself to the luxury of the Baron's politeness, until then beyond her reach. For the Baron was still very much alive and his mind alert; his intelligence had not been affected. Indeed, no chorus of Sophocles, chanting the humbled pride of Œdipus, not even death itself nor any funeral oration, could have proclaimed as effectively as did the Baron's meek and obsequious salutation of Mme. de Sainte-Euverte how perishable is the love of earthly grandeur and even human pride itself. M. de Charlus, who heretofore would not have consented to dine with Mme. de Sainte-Euverte, now bowed to the ground before her—perhaps, it is true, through ignorance of the rank of the person he was saluting (for the articles of the social code can be swept away by an apoplectic stroke as well as any other part of the memory) or, it may be, through lack of muscular co-ordination, which gave an appearance of humility, instead of his wonted haughtiness, to what was merely the uncertainty he probably felt as to the identity of the lady who was driving past. He saluted her, in short, with the polite manner of a child coming at its mother's call to greet an older person. And a child, indeed, he had become, but without a child's natural pride. To receive the homage of M. de Charlus was the height of social vanity for Mme. de Sainte-Euverte, as it had previously been for him to refuse it. Now, that unapproachable, over-punctilious nature which M. de Charlus had succeeded in making Mme. de Sainte-Euverte believe was an integral part of himself he completely destroyed at one stroke by the eager timidity, the zealous deference with which he raised his hat and, sitting there respectfully uncovered, let loose the torrents of his silvery locks with the eloquence of a Bossuet. After Jupien had helped the Baron get out of his carriage and I had greeted him, he talked with me very rapidly and in a voice so indistinct that I could not grasp what he said and had to ask him three times to repeat, which provoked a gesture of impatience that astonished me by reason of its contrast with the previous impassive expression on his face, doubtless

a vestige of his paralysis. But when I came to understand his mumbled words, I perceived that the sick man had retained his intelligence absolutely unimpaired. Moreover, there were two distinct persons in him, not counting the others. Of these two, the intellectual one spent his time lamenting the fact that he was losing the power of speech, continually pronouncing one word or one letter in place of another. But whenever this really did happen, the other M. de Charlus, the subconscious one, who wished to be envied as much as the other wanted to be pitied, instantly stopped the sentence he had begun, like an orchestra leader whose musicians are floundering, and with infinite ingenuity attached what followed to the word he had used in error but appeared to have chosen intentionally. Even his memory was undimmed; besides, he liked to shew off—not without the fatiguing effort of a most arduous concentration—by reviving some old and unimportant recollection concerning me in order to prove that he had retained, or recovered, his mental acuteness. Without moving his head or his eyes or varying his enunciation by a single inflexion, he said to me, for example, "There's a post with an advertisement on it like the one I was looking at the first time I ever saw you, at Avranches—no, I'm mistaken, it was at Balbec." And as a matter of fact, it was an advertisement of the same product. At the beginning, I scarcely made out what he said, just as one cannot see at all at first in a room where the curtains are drawn; but, like the eyes in semi-darkness, my ears soon became accustomed to this *pianissimo*. I think, too, that it grew gradually louder as the Baron talked, either because the feebleness of his voice was due in part to a nervous apprehension which vanished when his mind was taken off it by the presence of a third person, or because, on the contrary, this weakness was indicative of his general condition and the temporary energy with which he carried on a conversation arose from an artificial stimulation, transitory and, on the whole, deleterious, leading those who did not know to say, "He is already better; all

he needs is not to think of his trouble," but actually causing his trouble to come on again in aggravated form. Whichever it was, the Baron was now uttering his words with more vigour (even allowing for my increased ability to understand him) like the tide on a stormy day, throwing up its choppy little waves. And the after-effects of his recent stroke gave an undertone to his words like the sound of pebbles being rolled over and over. Besides, he continually talked to me about the past, in a solemn manner but without sadness, probably in order to demonstrate that he had not lost his memory. He incessantly enumerated all the members of his family or his social circle who had gone, apparently not so much from sorrow that they were no longer alive as from satisfaction at having outlived them. The recollection of their death seemed to give him a clearer realisation of his own return to health. It was with an almost triumphant callousness that he kept repeating in a monotonous tone of voice, stammering slightly and speaking with a thick, sepulchral resonance, "Hannibal de Bréauté, dead! Antoine de Mouchy, dead! Charles Swann, dead! Adalbert de Montmorency, dead! Baron de Talleyrand, dead! Sosthène de Doudeauville, dead!" And each time that word "dead!" seemed to fall like a shovelful of dirt, thrown heavily by a grave-digger anxious to rivet them more securely in their graves.

The Duchesse de Létourville, who was not going to the Princesse de Guermantes' reception because she had just recovered from a long illness, walked past us at this moment and, noticing the Baron, whose illness she had not known about, stopped to say good afternoon to him. The sickness she had just been through had not made her more sympathetic toward the illnesses of others but, on the contrary, more impatient with them, in a nervously ill-humoured manner in which there was, perhaps, much pity. Hearing the Baron pronounce some words incorrectly and with effort and seeing the difficulty he had in moving his arm, she looked first at Jupien, then at me, as if to ask the meaning

of such a shocking phenomenon. When we said nothing, she turned to M. de Charlus with a long look, full of sadness but also of reproach. She seemed to have a grievance against him for being seen in the street with her in such an unusual state, as if he had gone out without a necktie or without his shoes. At a fresh error of pronunciation on the part of the Baron, the Duchess's distress and also her indignation increased and she exclaimed, "Palamède!" in the questioning and exasperated tone of excessively nervous people who cannot bear to be kept waiting a minute and who, if you ask them in at once and apologise for going on with your toilette, reply sarcastically, not as an apology but as if blaming themselves, "Oh, I see I am inconveniencing you!" as though it were a crime on your part to be inconvenienced. Finally, with a more and more distressed air, she left us, saying to the Baron, "You'd better go home."

M. de Charlus said he would like to sit in a chair and rest while Jupien and I walked about a little, and he painfully drew from his pocket what looked to me like a prayer-book. I was not sorry for this opportunity to learn from Jupien many details concerning the Baron's physical and mental condition. "I am glad to have a talk with you, sir," Jupien said, "but we will not go beyond the *Rond-point*. Thank God, the Baron is in pretty good shape now, but I don't dare leave him alone very long; he's the same as ever, he's too kind-hearted, he would give away everything he possesses. And, besides, that isn't all; he's still as much of a 'gay boy' as any youngster and I have to keep my eyes open." "Especially now that he has recovered the use of his," I replied. "It made me very sad to hear that he had lost his sight." "His paralysis did affect him in that way; he was totally blind. Just imagine, during the treatment he took—which, by the way, did him a lot of good—for several months he could not see any more than a person born blind." "Well, at any rate, that must have made one important phase of your supervision quite unnecessary," I remarked. "Not at all. He had scarcely arrived at a

hotel, when he would ask me what such and such a one of the employees looked like. I would assure him they were all frights but he knew very well that that could not be true everywhere and that I must sometimes be lying. You see what an old rascal he is! Besides, he had a sort of flair, perhaps judging by the voice or something, and then he would scheme around to send me out on urgent errands. One day—you will excuse me for mentioning this, but you once happened into the Temple of Dishonour, so I need conceal nothing from you." (He always did have an unengaging way of taking satisfaction in showing off the secrets in his keeping.) "Well, one day I returned quickly from one of those supposedly urgent errands because I had an idea it had been made up for a purpose. Just as I got near the Baron's room, I heard someone say, 'What?' 'Why, this was your first time, then?' the Baron replied. I walked in without knocking and you can imagine my surprise! Misled by the voice—which was, it is true, stronger than is usual at that age and the Baron was then completely blind—the old gentleman, who used to prefer adult men, was with a mere child, not ten years old."

I have been told that M. de Charlus was subject at that time to almost daily fits of depression, characterised, not by incoherent rambling, but by confessing aloud—before others whose presence or whose sternly moral code he had forgotten—opinions he was usually accustomed to conceal, his pro-German sympathies, for example. Thus, a long time after the end of the war, he would lament the defeat of the Germans, of whom he considered himself one, saying proudly, "But still, it's impossible that we should not get our revenge, for we have proven that it was we who were capable of the greatest resistance and had the best organisation." Or his confidences would take on another tone and he would exclaim, white with anger, "Lord X..., or the Prince de X... would do well not to come here again and say what they said yesterday, for I had to hold on to myself not to reply to them, 'You know you're one of that kind

yourself, just as much as I'." It is needless to add that, when M. de Charlus, "not all there," as they say, made public confession in this way of pro-German or other tendencies, the persons who happened to be about him at the time, whether Jupien or the Duchesse de Guermantes, were in the habit of interrupting his imprudent remarks and giving them a strained but creditable interpretation for the benefit of any others present who were less intimate acquaintances and less discreet. "My God!" exclaimed Jupien, "I was right not to want us to go very far away. Look at him! He has already succeeded in striking up a conversation with a young gardener's helper. I must bid you good-bye. I dare not leave my patient alone one minute; he is nothing but an overgrown child."

* * *

Once more I left my carriage shortly before reaching the house of the Princesse de Guermantes and fell to thinking again of the lassitude and ennui with which I had endeavoured the day before, in what is considered one of the most beautiful parts of France, to describe the line that separated sunlight from shadow on the tree trunks. To be sure, the intellectual conclusions I had drawn did not to-day disturb my inner consciousness so cruelly. They remained the same; but, as occurred each time I happened to be torn away from my regular habits and to go out at a different hour or to a new place, I was conscious of a keen pleasure.

To-day this pleasure seemed to me a purely frivolous one, namely, that of attending an afternoon reception given by the Princesse de Guermantes. But since I now knew that I could not hope for other than frivolous pleasures, why deprive myself of them? I reminded myself that, when attempting that description, I had not experienced the enthusiasm which is one of the first signs of talent, though not the only one. I now tried to bring out from the storehouse of my memory other "snapshots," particularly those I had "taken" in Venice, but just the word "snapshot"

alone made it all as wearisome to me as an exhibition of photographs, and I felt within myself no more inclination or talent for describing now what I had seen years before than I felt yesterday for describing what I was at that very moment gazing upon with a painstaking and listless eye. In a few minutes many friends whom I had not seen for a very long time were doubtless going to ask me not to isolate myself, as I had been doing, but to devote my days to them. And I would have no reason for refusing, since I now had the proof that I was not good at anything, that I could no longer hope to find joy in literature, whether through my own fault, for lack of talent, or because literature itself was less pregnant with reality than I had thought.

When I reflected on what Bergotte had said to me, "You are ill, but you are not to be pitied, because you have intellectual satisfactions," I saw how greatly he had been mistaken about me. How little satisfaction I found in my clear but sterile thinking! I will even add that, if I occasionally had some pleasures—not of an intellectual sort—I wasted them with one woman and another, so that, even had Fate granted me a hundred more years to live, free from physical infirmities, this would merely have added successive extensions to an existence that had no depth, only length, and which there was no interest in prolonging at all, much less for any considerable length of time.

As for "intellectual satisfactions," could I apply this designation to the unemotional observations that my clear vision and close reasoning made joylessly and fruitlessly? But sometimes it is just at the moment when all appears lost that a signal comes which may save us; after knocking at all the doors that lead nowhere, the only one through which we can enter, one which we might have sought in vain for a hundred years, we stumble against unwittingly, and it opens.*

* In the French text, Volume I ends at this point.—*F.A.B.*

Engrossed in the unhappy meditations I described a moment ago, I had entered the court of the Guermantes residence and, in my absorption, failed to notice an automobile that was coming in; at the chauffeur's cry I had barely time to get out of the way and, in stepping back, struck my foot against some unevenly cut flagstones leading to a carriage house. In recovering my balance, I put my foot on a stone that was a little lower than the one next to it; immediately all my discouragement vanished before a feeling of happiness which I had experienced at different moments of my life, at the sight of trees I thought I recognised when driving around Balbec, or the church spires of Martinville, or the savour of a *madeleine* dipped in herb tea, or from many other sensations I have mentioned, which had seemed to me to be synthesised in the last works of Vinteuil. Just as when I tasted the *madeleine,* all anxiety as to the future, all intellectual doubt was dispelled. The misgivings that had been harassing me a moment before concerning the reality of my literary gifts, and even of literature itself, were suddenly banished as if by magic. But this time I made a firm resolve that I would not be satisfied to leave the question unanswered (as I did the day I tasted of a *madeleine* dipped in herb tea) as to why, without my having worked out any new line of reasoning or found any decisive argument, the difficulties that had seemed insoluble a short time before had now lost all their importance. The feeling of happiness which had just come over me was, indeed, exactly the same as I had experienced while eating the *madeleine,* but at that time I put off seeking the deep-lying causes for it. There was a purely material difference in the mental images evoked. A deep azure blue intoxicated my sight, impressions of coolness and dazzling light hovered near me and, in my eagerness to seize them, not daring to move—just as when I tasted the flavour of the *madeleine* and tried to bring back to my mind what it suggested to me—I stood there, swaying back and forth, as I had done a moment before, one foot on the higher stone and the other on the lower, indifferent to

the possible amusement of the large crowd of chauffeurs. Each time that I merely repeated the action physically, the effort was in vain; but if I forgot the Guermantes reception and succeeded in recapturing the sensation I had felt the instant I placed my feet in that position, again the dazzling, elusive vision brushed me with its wings, as if to say, "Seize me in my flight, if you have the power, and try to solve the riddle of happiness I propound to you." And almost immediately I recognised it; it was Venice, about which my efforts at description and the supposed "snapshots" taken by my memory had never yielded me anything, but which was brought back to me by the sensation I had once felt as I stood on two uneven flagstones in the baptistry of Saint Mark's, and with that sensation came all the others connected with it that day, which had been waiting in their proper place in the series of forgotten days, until a sudden happening had imperiously commanded them to come forth. It was in the same way that the taste of the little *madeleine* had recalled Combray to my mind. But why had the mental images of Combray and Venice at their respective moments given me a joy like a sense of certainty, sufficient, without other proofs, to make me indifferent to death? While I was still putting this question to myself, determined this time to find the answer to it, I entered the Guermantes mansion —for we always put ahead of the subjective task we have to perform the outward rôle we are playing, and mine that day was that of an invited guest. But, when I reached the second story, a butler asked me to step for a moment into a small library adjoining the buffet, until the selection they were playing was finished, the Princess having forbidden that the doors be opened while it was being played. At that very moment a second signal came to reinforce the one I had received from the two uneven flagstones, and urged me to persevere in my task. What happened was that a servant, trying in vain to make no noise, struck a spoon against a plate. The same kind of felicity as I had received from the uneven paving stones now came over me; the sensations

were again those of great heat, but entirely different, mingled with the odour of smoke, tempered by the cool fragrance of a forest setting, and I recognized that what seemed to me so delightful was the very row of trees which I had found it wearisome to study and describe and which, in a sort of hallucination, I thought now stood before me as I uncorked the bottle of beer I had with me in the railway carriage, the sound of the spoon striking the plate having given me—until I came to myself again—the illusion of the very similar noise of the hammer of a workman who had made some repairs to a wheel while our train stopped before that little clump of trees. Then one would have said that the signs which were to lift me out of my discouragement that day and restore my faith in literature had determined to come thick and fast, for when a butler who had been for a long time in the service of the Prince de Guermantes recognised me and, in order to save my going to the buffet, brought to me in the library a small plate of *petits fours* and a glass of orangeade, I wiped my mouth with the napkin he had given me; but immediately, like the character in *The Arabian Nights* who unwittingly performs precisely the rite that calls up before him, visible to his eyes alone, a docile genie, ready to transport him far away, a fresh vision of azure blue passed before my eyes; but this time it was pure and saline and it rounded upward like bluish breasts. The impression was so vivid that the moment I was re-living fused with the real present and, more dazed than on that day when I wondered whether I was really going to be received by the Princesse de Guermantes or was everything going to crash about my head, I thought the servant had just opened the window toward the beach and everything called me to go down and stroll along the embankment at high tide; the napkin which I had taken to wipe my mouth had precisely the same sort of starchy stiffness as the towel with which I had had so much trouble drying myself before the window the first day of my stay at Balbec, and now, in this library of the Guermantes mansion, it spread out

in its various folds and creases, like a peacock's tail, the plumage of a green and blue ocean. And I drew enjoyment, not only from those colours, but from a whole moment of my life which had brought them into being and had no doubt been an aspiration toward them, but which perhaps some feeling of fatigue or sadness had prevented me from enjoying at Balbec and which now, pure and disembodied, freed from all the imperfections of objective perception, filled me with joy. The piece they were playing was likely to finish at any moment and I be obliged to enter the salon. Therefore I made an effort to try as quickly as possible to see clearly into the nature of the identical pleasures I had just felt three separate times within a few minutes, and then to draw from them the lesson they had to give. The great difference there is between the actual impression we received from something and the artificial impression we create for ourselves when we endeavour by an effort of the will to bring the object before us again, I did not pause to consider; remembering only too well the comparative indifference with which Swann used to be able to speak of the period in his life when he was loved (because this expression suggested something so different to him) and the sudden pain caused him by Vinteuil's little phrase, which brought to mind those days themselves just as he had felt them, I understood too clearly that the sensation of the uneven flagstones, the stiffness of the napkin and the savour of the *madeleine* had awakened in me something that had no relation to what I used to endeavour to recall to mind about Venice, Balbec, Combray with the aid of a colourless, undistinguishing memory. And I understood how one can come to judge life to be mediocre, when at certain times it seems so beautiful, because this judgment and this disparaging conclusion are based on something entirely different from life itself, on mental images which have retained no trace of life. At the most, I noted incidentally that the difference between each of these real impressions and the corresponding artificial one—differences which explain why an even-toned painting

of life cannot be a true likeness—was probably due to this cause, namely, that the slightest word we have spoken or the most insignificant gesture we have made at a certain moment in our life was surrounded and illumined by things that logically had no relation to it and were separated from it by our intelligence, which had no need of them for reasoning purposes; and yet, in the midst of these irrelevant objects—here, the rosy glow of eventide on the flower-covered wall of a rustic restaurant, the feeling of hunger, the yearning for women, the pleasant sensation of luxury; there, blue volutes of the morning sea, wrapped in spirals around strains of music which only partly emerge, like mermaids' shoulders—the most insignificant gesture, the simplest act remain enclosed, as it were, in a thousand sealed jars, each filled with things of an absolutely different colour, odour and temperature. Furthermore, these jars, ranged along the topmost levels of our bygone years—years during which we have been constantly changing, if only in our dreams and thoughts—stand at very different altitudes and give us the impression of strangely varied atmospheres. It is true that we have gone through these changes imperceptibly, but between our present state and the memory that suddenly comes back to us, just as between two recollections of different years, places or hours, there is such a wide difference that that fact alone, regardless even of any specific individuality, would suffice to make comparison between them impossible. Yes, if, thanks to our ability to forget, a past recollection has been able to avoid any tie, any link with the present moment, if it has remained in its own place and time, if it has kept its distance, its isolation in the depths of a valley or on the tip of a mountain peak, it suddenly brings us a breath of fresh air—refreshing just because we have breathed it once before—of that purer air which the poets have vainly tried to establish in Paradise, whereas it could not convey that profound sensation of renewal if it had not already been breathed, for the only true paradise is always the paradise we have lost. And, in passing, I noted that the

work of art which I already felt myself prepared to undertake, but without my having made any conscious resolution to that effect, would present great difficulties. For I would be obliged to execute the different parts of it in somewhat different mediums. The medium suitable for recalling mornings by the sea would be very different from that required to describe afternoons in Venice, a medium distinct and new, of a very special transparence and sonority, compact, refreshing and rosy-hued. And then, different again would be the medium, if I essayed to depict the evenings at Rivebelle in the dining-room opening on the garden, when the heat seemed to disintegrate, to condense and settle to the ground, while the falling twilight still tinted the roses on the wall of the restaurant and the sky still glowed with the pastel tints of dying day. But I passed quickly over all that, under the more imperious urge which I felt to seek the reason for this feeling of happiness and the air of certainty with which it came over me, a search I had hitherto postponed. I caught an inkling of this reason when I compared these various happy impressions with one another and found that they had this in common, namely, that I felt them as if they were occurring simultaneously in the present moment and in some distant past, which the sound of the spoon against the plate, or the unevenness of the flagstones, or the peculiar savour of the *madeleine* even went so far as to make coincide with the present, leaving me uncertain in which period I was. In truth, the person within me who was at that moment enjoying this impression enjoyed in it the qualities it possessed which were common to both an earlier day and the present moment, qualities which were independent of all considerations of time; and this person came into play only when, by this process of identifying the past with the present, he could find himself in the only environment in which he could live and enjoy the essence of things, that is to say, entirely outside of time. That explained why my apprehensiveness of death vanished the moment I instinctively recognised the savour of the little *madeleine,* because

at that moment the person within me was a timeless person, consequently unconcerned with the vicissitudes of the future. That person had never come to me, never manifested himself, except independently of all immediate activity, all immediate enjoyment, whenever the miracle of a resemblance with things past enabled me to escape out of the present. He alone had the power to make me recapture bygone days, times past, which had always balked the efforts of my memory and my intelligence.

And perhaps a moment ago, when I considered that Bergotte had been mistaken in speaking of the satisfactions of the intellectual life, this was because at that time I applied the term "intellectual life" to logical processes of reasoning which had no connection with it or with what was then taking place within me—just as the reason I found society and even life tiresome was because I appraised them on the basis of false impressions of the past, whereas in reality I had now such an eager desire to live that an actual moment from the past had just been revived within me on three distinct occasions.

Merely a moment from the past? Much more than that, perhaps; something which, common to both past and present, is far more essential than either.

How many times in the course of my life had I been disappointed by reality because, at the time I was observing it, my imagination, the only organ with which I could enjoy beauty, was not able to function, by virtue of the inexorable law which decrees that only that which is absent can be imagined. And now suddenly the operation of this harsh law was neutralised, suspended, by a miraculous expedient of nature by which a sensation—the sound of the spoon * and that of the hammer, a similar unevenness in two paving stones—was reflected both in the past (which made it possible for my imagination to take pleasure in it) and in the present, the physical stimulus of the sound or the contact with the stones adding to the dreams of the imagination that

* "Fork" in the French text here.—*F.A.B.*

which they usually lack, the idea of existence—and this subterfuge made it possible for the being within me to seize, isolate, immobilise for the duration of a lightning flash what it never apprehends, namely, a fragment of time in its pure state. The being that was called to life again in me when, with such a thrill of joy, I heard the sound that characterises both a spoon touching a plate and a hammer striking a car wheel, or when I felt under foot the unevenness of the pavement in the court of the Guermantes residence, similar to that in the baptistry of Saint Mark's, draws its sustenance only from the essence of things, in that alone does it find its nourishment and its delight. It languishes in the contemplation of the present, where the senses cannot furnish this essential substance, or in the study of the past, rendered barren for it by the intelligence, or while awaiting a future which the will constructs out of fragments of the past and the present from which it has withdrawn still more of their reality, retaining only that part of them which is suited to the utilitarian, narrowly human purpose for which it designs them. But let a sound already heard or an odour caught in bygone years be sensed anew, simultaneously in the present and the past, real without being of the present moment, ideal but not abstract, and immediately the permanent essence of things, usually concealed, is set free and our true self, which had long seemed dead but was not dead in other ways, awakes, takes on fresh life as it receives the celestial nourishment brought to it. A single minute released from the chronological order of time has re-created in us the human being similarly released, in order that he may sense that minute. And one comprehends readily how such a one can be confident in his joy; even though the mere taste of a *madeleine* does not seem to contain logical justification for this joy, it is easy to understand that the word "death" should have no meaning for him; situated outside the scope of time, what could he fear from the future?

But this illusion, which brought close to me a moment from the past, incompatible with the present, never lasted

any length of time. One can, it is true, prolong the visions evoked by voluntary recollection, which do not engage more of our faculties than flipping the pages of a picture book. Thus, for example, on that day long gone by, when I was to call for the first time on the Princesse de Guermantes, from the sun-bathed court of our Paris house I had idly called up before me at will, now the Place de l'Eglise at Combray, now the beach at Balbec, very much as I might have illustrated the kind of day it was by turning the pages of a book of watercolour sketches made in the different places I had visited, saying to myself, with the selfish pleasure of a collector, as I thus catalogued the illustrations in my memory, "Just the same, I have seen some beautiful things in my life!" At that time, no doubt my memory asserted the differences between the sensations, but all it did was to combine homogeneous elements. Such had not been the case, however, with the three memories of the past which had just come over me, from which, instead of conceiving a more flattering idea of my inner self, I had on the contrary almost come to doubt the present reality of this self. Just as on the day when I had dipped the *madeleine* in the hot tea, at the very heart of the place where I happened to be (whether, as then, it was my room in Paris or, as to-day, at this very moment, the library of the Prince de Guermantes or, a moment ago, the court in front of his residence) there had been within me, radiating outward around me from a small zone, a sensation—the taste of a *madeleine* dipped in tea, a metallic sound, the feeling of uneven steps—which was common both to the place where I happened to be and also to some other place—the bedroom of my Aunt Léonie, a railway carriage, the baptistry of Saint Mark's. And at the moment I was reasoning thus, the shrill noise of a hot-water pipe, exactly like the long blasts we sometimes heard of a summer evening from pleasure boats off Balbec, made me feel (as I had already felt once before in a large restaurant in Paris at the sight of the luxurious dining-room, half empty, hot and summery) much more than merely a sensation similar to

the one I felt at Balbec toward the end of one afternoon when, the tables already covered with their linen and silverware, the vast windows wide open on the embankment without a single interruption, a single intervening plenum of glass or stone, and the sun slowly setting over the ocean, where boats were beginning to move about, I could join Albertine and her friends, strolling on the embankment, by merely stepping over the wooden window frame, scarcely higher than my ankle, in the groove of which they had slid back the sectional windows in order to ventilate the hotel. Moreover, it was not merely an echo or a duplication of a past sensation which the sound of the hot-water pipe had just made me experience, but that very sensation itself. In that case, as in all the preceding ones, the sensation common to both occasions had sought to re-create about itself the former setting, while the present setting, which was occupying its space, opposed with all the resistance of its mass this invasion of a Paris residence by a Normandy beach or a railway embankment. The dining-room by the sea at Balbec, with its damask linen laid like altar cloths to receive the setting of the sun, had sought to shatter the solidity of the Guermantes mansion and force open its doors, and it had for an instant made the sofas rock about me, as it had, on another day, the tables in a Paris restaurant. Always, in these resurrections of the past, the distant place, evoked about the common sensation, had grappled for a moment, like a wrestler, with the present scene. The latter had always been the victor but it was ever the vanquished that seemed to me the more beautiful, so that I was in a state of ecstasy as I stood on the uneven pavement—as I had been when I sat before the cup of tea—seeking to perpetuate as soon as they appeared, or to bring back to mind after they had escaped me, that Combray, that Balbec, that Venice which rose out of the past and invaded the very heart of these places in the present (which, however, the past can permeate) only to be forced to retreat and abandon me. And if the present scene had not been immediately victorious,

I believe I should have fainted; for, during the instant that they last, these resurrections of the past are so complete that they do not merely oblige our eyes to become oblivious to the room before them and contemplate instead the rising tide or the railway track edged with trees; they also force our nostrils to inhale the air of places which are, however, far remote, constrain our will to choose between the various plans they lay before us, compel our entire being to believe itself surrounded by them, or at least to vacillate between them and the present scenes, bewildered by an uncertainty similar to that which one sometimes experiences before an ineffable vision at the moment of losing consciousness in sleep.

Thus it was that what the being three and even four times revived within me had just enjoyed was perhaps, it is true, fragments of existence removed outside the realm of time, but this contemplation, although part of eternity, was transitory. And yet I felt that the pleasure it had bestowed on me at rare intervals in my life was the only one that was fecund and real. Is not the indication of the unreality of the others sufficiently evident either in their inability to satisfy us—as, for example, social pleasures, which at best produce the discomfort caused by partaking of wretched food; or friendship, which is a delusion, because, for whatever moral reasons he may do it, the artist who gives up an hour of work for an hour's conversation with a friend knows that he is sacrificing a reality for something which is non-existent (friends appearing to be such only thanks to that gentle madness from which we suffer throughout our lives and to which we give way, though, in the depth of our intelligence, we know it to be the error of a mind unbalanced enough even to believe the chairs and tables alive and to carry on a conversation with them)—or in the despondency that follows whatever satisfaction they may give, like the sadness I felt the day I was introduced to Albertine because I had gone to that trouble (very slight, it is true) to accomplish something—making a young girl's acquaintance—which seemed unimportant now only because I had accomplished

it? Even a profounder pleasure, such as I might have experienced when I was in love with Albertine, was realised only inversely by the distress I felt when she was not there, for, whenever I was certain she was coming, like the day she returned from the Trocadéro, it seemed to me I experienced only a vague ennui; whereas I became more and more exalted as I analysed more and more deeply the sound of the spoon * against the plate or the taste of the herb tea, with an ever increasing joy which had transported into my room the bedroom of my Aunt Léonie and, in its wake, all Combray and the two walks, Guermantes way and Méséglise way.

And so I was decided to consecrate myself to this study of the essence of things, to establish its true nature, but how should I do this, by what means? It is true that, when the stiffness of the napkin called up Balbec before me and for a moment caressed my imagination not only with a mental picture of the sea as it was that morning long ago, but also with the odour of the room, the force of the wind, the desire for luncheon, the hesitation which walk to choose—all of that attached to the sensation of the open sea, like the wings of a water wheel in its dizzy course; and again, when the unevenness of the two paving stones extended in every direction and all dimensions the bare and barren impressions I had of Venice and Saint Mark's and likewise all the sensations I had experienced there, connecting the *piazza* with the church, the *imbarcadero* with the *piazza,* the canal with the *imbarcadero* and, with all that the eyes see, that world of desires which is perceived only with the mind—it is true that at those moments I was tempted—if not, on account of the season, to go and idly glide over the waters of Venice, which I associated more especially with the springtime—at any rate to return to Balbec. But I did not tarry an instant with this idea; not only did I know that distant places were not what was suggested to me by the names they bore when I imagined them to myself. (It was now almost exclusively in my dreams, while sleeping, that a place would spread

* "Knife" in the French text here.—*F.A.B.*

itself out before me composed of pure matter, entirely distinct from the common things one sees and touches.) But even with regard to those mental images of another sort, those of memory, I knew that I had not found the beauty of Balbec when I went there, and even the beauty it had left me, that of memory, was no longer the same as that which I found on my second visit there. I had too often experienced the impossibility of discovering in physical form what was in the depths of my being. It was not in the Piazza San Marco, any more than it had been on my second visit to Balbec or on my return to Tansonville to see Gilberte, that I would recapture past Time, and the journey which was merely suggested to me once more by the illusion that these old impressions existed outside myself, at the corner of a certain square, could not be the means I was seeking. I did not want to follow another false trail, for the important thing for me was at last to determine whether it was really possible to attain what, because of my constant disappointment in places and persons, I had believed to be unrealisable (although at one time the concert piece by Vinteuil had seemed to tell me the opposite). Therefore I was not going to attempt another experiment along the path which I had long known led nowhere. Impressions such as those which I was endeavouring to analyse and define could not fail to vanish away at the contact of a material enjoyment that was unable to bring them into existence. The only way to get more joy out of them was to try to know them more completely at the spot where they were to be found, namely, within myself, and to clarify them to their lowest depths. I had not been able to grasp the happiness at Balbec, any more than I had that of living with Albertine, as it had not been perceptible to me until the occasion had come and gone. And if I recapitulated the disappointments in my life, as far as it had been lived, which led me to believe that its real essence must lie somewhere else than in action, and compared different disappointments, but not in a haphazard manner or merely following the vicissitudes of my existence,

I came to realise clearly that disappointment in a journey and disappointment in a love affair were not different in themselves but merely the different aspects assumed in varying situations by our inability to find our real selves in physical enjoyment or material activity. And thinking over again that timeless joy caused by the sound of the spoon or the taste of the *madeleine,* I said to myself, "Was that the happiness suggested by the little phrase of the sonata to Swann, who made the mistake of confusing it with the pleasure of love and was unable to find it in artistic creation—that happiness which I came to sense dimly was even farther removed from everything earthly than the little phrase of the sonata had suggested, when I caught the red, mysterious call of that septet which Swann had never known, having died, like so many others, before the truth intended for them had been revealed?" But it would have availed him nothing in any case, for that phrase may, indeed, have been able to symbolise a call, but it could not have created talents and made of Swann the writer he never was. However, after having meditated a short while over these resurrections of past memories, I became aware that in another way obscure impressions had sometimes, even as far back as Combray along the Guermantes way, engaged my thoughts after the manner of those subjective recollections, but these others concealed within themselves, not a sensation of bygone days, but a new truth, a priceless image, which I sought to discover by efforts like those one makes to recall something forgotten, as if our most beautiful ideas were like musical airs that would come back to us without our ever having heard them and which we would make an effort to seize and transcribe. I remembered with pleasure, because it shewed me that I was already the same then as now and it was an indication of a fundamental trait of my nature (but also with sadness when I reflected that I had made no progress since then) that even when I was at Combray, I used to hold attentively before my mind some object that had forced itself upon my attention—a cloud, a triangle, a steeple, a flower, a pebble—

because I felt there might be underneath these signs something quite different which I ought to try to discover, a thought which they transcribed after the manner of those hieroglyphics which one might think represented only material objects. Most assuredly this deciphering was difficult but it alone offered some truth to be read. For the truths that the intelligence grasps directly and openly in the full-lighted world are somehow less profound, less indispensable than those which life has communicated to us without our knowledge through the form of impressions, material because they have come to us through our senses, but the inner meaning of which we can discern. In short, in this case as in the other, whether objective impressions such as I had received from the sight of the spires of Martinville, or subjective memories like the unevenness of the two steps or the taste of the *madeleine*, I must try to interpret the sensations as the indications of corresponding laws and ideas; I must try to think, that is to say, bring out of the obscurity what I had felt, and convert it into a spiritual equivalent. Now this method, which seemed to me the only one, what was it other than to create a work of art? And already the consequences came crowding into my mind; for, whether it was subjective memories of the type of the sound made by the spoon * or the taste of the *madeleine*, or those truths recorded with the aid of external objects, the significance of which I sought to find within my head, where, jumbled together, steeples, wild flowers, they made up a complicated, flower-bedecked medley, their first characteristic was that I was not free to choose them but they came to my mind pell-mell. And I felt that that must surely be the hall mark of their genuineness. I had not set out to seek the two paving stones in the court which I struck my foot against. But it was precisely the fortuitous, unavoidable way in which I had come upon the sensation that guaranteed the truth of a past which that sensation revived and of the mental images it released, since we feel its effort to come up into the light and also the thrill

* "Fork" in the French text here.—*F.A.B.*

of recapturing reality. That sensation is the guarantee of the truth of the entire picture composed of contemporary impressions which the sensation brings in its train, with that unerring proportion of light and shadow, emphasis and omission, remembrance and oblivion, which conscious memory and observation will never know.

To read the subjective book of these strange signs (signs standing out boldly, it seemed, which my conscious mind, as it explored my unconscious self, went searching for, stumbled against and passed around, like a diver groping his way), no one could help me with any rule, for the reading of that book is a creative act in which no one can stand in our stead, or even collaborate with us. And therefore how many there are who shrink from writing it; how many tasks are undertaken in order to avoid that one! Each happening, the Dreyfus case, the war, supplied fresh excuses to the writers for not deciphering that book—they wished to assure the triumph of right, rebuild the moral unity of the nation, and they had no time to think of literature. But these were only excuses; they had no talent, that is to say, no instinct, or had lost what they formerly had. For instinct dictates the duty to be done and intelligence supplies the excuses for evading it. But in art excuses count for nothing; good intentions are of no avail; the artist must at every instant heed his instinct; so that art is the most real of all things, the sternest school in life and truly the Last Judgment. This book, the most difficult of all to decipher, is also the only one dictated to us by reality, the only one the "imprinting" of which on our consciousness was done by reality itself. No matter what idea life may have implanted within us, its material representation, the outline of the impression it has made upon us, is always the guarantee of its indispensable truth. The ideas formed by pure intellect have only a logical truth, a potential truth; the selection of them is an arbitrary act. The book written in symbolic characters not traced by us is our only book. Not that the ideas we form ourselves may not be logically correct, but we do not know whether they

are true. Only the subjective impression, however inferior the material may seem to be and however improbable the outline, is a criterion of truth and for that reason it alone merits being apprehended by the mind, for it alone is able, if the mind can extract this truth, to lead the mind to a greater perfection and impart to it a pure joy. The subjective impression is for the writer what experimentation is for the scientist, but with this difference, that with the scientist the work of the intelligence precedes, and with the writer it comes afterwards. Anything we have not had to decipher and clarify by our own personal effort, anything that was clear before we intervened, is not our own. Nothing comes from ourselves but that which we draw out of the obscurity within us and which is unknown to others. And since art is a faithful re-composing of life, around these truths that one has attained within oneself there floats an atmosphere of poetry, the sweetness of a mystery, which is merely the semi-darkness through which we have come. An oblique ray of the setting sun instantly recalls to me a period in my early childhood that I had never thought of since—when my Aunt Léonie had an illness which Dr. Percepied feared might be typhoid fever, so they moved me for a week into the little room Eulalie had on the Place de l'Église, which had only a grass rug on the floor and a muslin curtain at the window and always hummed with a sunshine I was not accustomed to. And as I saw how the remembrance of that little room of a former servant suddenly added to my past life a long stretch of time so different from the rest and so delightful, I thought by contrast of the utter nullity of the impressions that the most sumptuous affairs in the most princely mansions had contributed to my life. The only slightly unpleasant thing about that room of Eulalie's was that, owing to the nearness of the railway bridge, you could hear the shrieking whistles of the trains at night. But since I knew that these cries came from machines under control, I was not frightened, as I might have been in a prehistoric age by the

howlings of some nearby mammoth in his free and unregulated wanderings.

Thus I had already come to the conclusion that we are not at all free in the presence of the work of art to be created, that we do not do it as we ourselves please, but that it existed prior to us and we should seek to discover it as we would a natural law because it is both necessary and hidden. But when art enabled us to make this discovery, was it not disclosing to us, after all, what we ought to hold most precious but what usually remains forever unknown to us, our true life, reality as we have felt it, so different from what we think that we are filled with great happiness when chance brings back to us the true remembrance of it? I convinced myself of this by the falseness of even the art that calls itself "realist," which would not be so untruthful if we had not formed in life the habit of giving to our sensations an outward expression so different from them, which after a short while we take for reality itself. I realised that I would not have to trouble myself about the various literary theories that had disturbed me for a time, more especially those the critics developed at the time of the Dreyfus case and revived during the war, which sought to "make the artist come out of his ivory tower," scorn frivolous or sentimental subjects, depict great working-class movements and, if not huge crowds, at any rate no more insignificant idlers ("I confess that the portrayal of these useless persons is of no particular interest to me," Bloch said) but high-minded intellectuals or heroes. Moreover, leaving one side for the present the consideration of their logical content, these theories seemed to me a proof of inferiority on the part of those who advanced them, just as a really well bred child, hearing some people with whom he has been sent to have luncheon say, "We speak right out, we are frank," feels that this remark indicates a moral quality inferior to the good deed, pure and simple, which says nothing. True art has no use for so many proclamations and is produced in silence. Moreover, those who theorised thus used ready-made expressions which

bore a marked resemblance to the very ones they branded as imbecile. And perhaps it is more by the quality of the language used than by the æsthetic principles observed that one can determine to what level an intellectual or moral effort has been carried. But inversely, this quality of language which the theoreticians believe they can disregard (and even when it comes to studying the laws of character, one can do this quite as well on a frivolous as a serious subject, just as a prosector can study the laws of anatomy precisely as well on the body of an imbecile as on that of a man of talent, for the great moral laws, like those governing the circulation of the blood or renal elimination, vary but little with the intellectual worth of the individual) is readily believed by those who admire these theoreticians not to be a proof of intellectual value, which they cannot infer from the beauty of an image and can discern only if they see it expressed in direct form. From this comes the vulgar temptation for the writer to produce intellectual works. A grave lack of fine feeling! A book in which there are theories is like an article from which the price mark has not been removed. And even at that, a price mark merely expresses value, whereas in literature logical reasoning lessens it. We reason, that is to say, we wander about aimlessly, whenever we lack the power to compel ourselves to pass a subjective impression through all the successive stages that shall finally lead to its comprehension and definition and to the expression of its reality. The reality to be expressed, I now understood, was to be found, not in the outward appearance of the subject, but in the extent to which this impression had penetrated to a depth where that appearance was of little importance, as was symbolised by that sound of a spoon against a plate, that starchy stiffness of the napkin, both of more priceless value for my spiritual renewal than any number of conversations on humanitarianism, patriotism or internationalism. "No more style!" I had heard them say in those earlier days. "No more literature! Give us life!" One may imagine how extensively even the simple theories of M. de Norpois

" against the flute-players " had blossomed forth again since the beginning of the war. For everyone who, having no artistic sense—that is to say, no submission to subjective reality —may have the knack of reasoning about art till doomsday, especially if he be, in addition, a diplomat or financier in contact with the " realities " of the present day, is only too ready to believe that literature is an intellectual game which is destined to be gradually abandoned as time goes on. Some wished the novel to be a sort of cinematographic parade. This conception was absurd. In reality, nothing is farther removed than this cinematographic view from what we have perceived.

It so happened that as I entered this library, I remembered what the Goncourts say about the beautiful first editions which it contains, and I determined to look them over during the time I was obliged to wait there. And while still continuing my reasoning, I was taking out the precious volumes one by one—without paying much attention to them, I admit—when, just as I opened one of them absent-mindedly, George Sand's *François le Champi,* I felt myself unpleasantly struck by some impression very much out of harmony with what I had been meditating upon, until finally, with an emotion so strong that it moved me to tears, I came to see how fully that impression was in agreement with my thoughts. It was as though, at the very moment when the undertaker's assistants are about to lower the casket into the burial vault, the son of a man who had rendered great service to his country, as he is clasping the hands of the last friends who file past, hears a sudden blare of trumpets under the windows and becomes indignant, believing it some mocking insult to his grief, and then, understanding that it is a regiment band come to share his sorrow and do honour to his father's remains, he can no longer hold back his tears, although till then he has mastered his emotions. In like manner, I had just recognised the painful impression I had experienced as I read the title of a book in the library of the Prince de Guermantes, a title which had formerly given me

the idea that literature offered us that world of mystery which I now no longer found in it. And yet it was not a very unusual book, *François le Champi,* but that name, like the name "Guermantes," meant something different to me from the names I had come to know since then. The remembrance of what had seemed inexplicable to me in the subject of *François le Champi* while Mamma was reading it to me had been aroused by this title, in much the same way as the name "Guermantes" (when I had not seen the Guermantes family for a long time) contained so much of feudalism for me—just as *François le Champi* contained the essence of the novel—and for an instant it replaced the very general idea as to what George Sand's novels of the Berry country are. At a dinner party, where thought is always superficial, I might, of course, have talked of *François le Champi* and the Guermantes without their being, either of them, those I had known at Combray. But when I was alone, as at this moment, I plunged far deeper into my thoughts. At that time, the idea that some person whose acquaintance I had made in society was a cousin of Mme. de Guermantes, that is to say, of a magic-lantern personage, was more than I could grasp, and quite as incomprehensible was the suggestion that the most beautiful books I had read might be—I will not say superior (which they were, however) but even equal to that extraordinary *François le Champi.* This was an impression of my very early days, in which the memories of childhood and the home were tenderly intermingled, and I had not recognised it at once. The first instant I angrily asked myself who was the stranger that came thus to cause me pain, and that stranger was my own self, the child I had been in those days, aroused within me by this book, which, not knowing me except as this child, had instantly called him forth, wishing to be gazed at by his eyes alone, loved only by his heart, and to talk to no one but him. And that is why this book, which my mother had read aloud to me at Combray almost until early morning, had retained for me all the spell of that night. It is true that "the pen"

of George Sand (to borrow a favourite expression of Brichot, who loved to say that a book was "written with a lively pen") did not at all seem to me to be a magic pen, as it had for so long to my mother, before she gradually came to pattern her literary tastes on mine. But it was a pen that I had unwittingly magnetised, as schoolboys often amuse themselves doing, and now a thousand little details of Combray, which I had not seen for many a year, came nimbly dancing along of their own accord, one behind the other, and hung themselves on the nib of that electrified pen in an endless chain of tremulous memories. Certain minds which are fond of mystery maintain that objects retain something from the eyes that have gazed upon them, that monuments and pictures are visible to us only through the perceptible veil woven for them by the love and contemplation of many worshippers throughout the centuries. This fantasy would become true if they would transfer it into the field of the only reality that exists for each of us, our own sensitiveness to impressions.

Yes, in that sense and that sense only, but it is even more extensive, something we looked at long ago, if we see it again, brings back to us, along with the look we cast upon it, all the images it conveyed to us at that time. This is because things—a book in its red binding, like so many others—as soon as we take conscious notice of them, become something immaterial within us of the same character as all our sensations and preoccupations of that moment and combine indissolubly with them. Some name we read in a book in bygone years, for example, contains among its syllables the strong breeze and brilliant sunshine of the day when we came across it. In the slightest sensation conveyed to us by the most ordinary food—the fragrance of a cup of coffee, for instance—we recapture that vague hope of fair weather which beguiled us so often in the uncertainty of the morning sky when the day was still intact and full. An hour is a vase filled with perfumes, with sounds, with moments, with changing moods and climates. Consequently,

that literature which is satisfied to "describe * objects," to give merely a miserable listing of lines and surfaces, is the very one which, while styling itself "realist," is the farthest removed from reality, the one that impoverishes and saddens us the most, for it sharply cuts off all communication of our present self with the past, the essence of which was preserved in those objects, or with the future, in which they stimulate us to enjoy the past anew. It is that essence which art worthy of the name must express and, if it fails to do this, one can even then draw a lesson from its failure (whereas one draws no lesson from even the successes of realism) namely, that this essence is in part subjective and cannot be communicated to others.

More than that, a thing we saw at a certain period, or a book we once read, does not remain forever associated solely with what was about us at that time; they are attached quite as faithfully to what we then were and they can be lived through again only by the conglomerate of sensations, the person, we then were. In this library, if I pick up *François le Champi* again, even in thought, there immediately rises within me a child who takes my place and alone has the right to read that title, *François le Champi,* and who reads it as he did years ago, with the same impression of the weather out in the garden, the same dreams as he dreamed that day about far-away lands and life, the same anguish about the morrow. But let me see some object from another bygone time and a different young man will arise within me. And my inner self of to-day is merely an abandoned quarry which believes that all the marble it contains is uniform and monotonous, but out of which each remembrance, like a Greek sculptor, carves innumerable statues. I purposely said "some object," for books act in this respect the same as objects, and the way a book used to open, or the grain of the paper may have retained as keen a remembrance of what I

* The word *décimer* which occurs here in the French original would seem to be a misprint for *décrire*, which appears a few pages further on in the same connexion and similarly between quotes.—*F.A.B.*

imagined Venice to be like, for instance, and my longing to go there, as the sentences themselves. Even keener, for the latter are sometimes a hindrance, like photographs of a person, which prevent one from recalling him as well as if one were satisfied merely to think about him. It is true, with many books of my childhood (and, alas, even with some of Bergotte's) if I happened to pick them up some evening when I was tired, I did it, I must admit, only as I might have taken a train, in the hope of resting my spirit with the sight of different objects and a breath of air from olden times. But it happens also that the much-desired recalling of things past is actually hampered by a prolonged reading of the book. There is one book by Bergotte (the copy in the Prince's library bore an extremely fawning and platitudinous inscription) which I read all through in one winter's day long ago, when I could not see Gilberte, and now I cannot manage to find the pages I loved so much. Certain words here and there make me think it might be those pages, but that is impossible, for where then, can be the beauty I thought I found there? But the snow that covered the Champs-Elysées the day I read that book still lies upon it; I can see it still. And that is why, if I had been tempted to be a book collector, as the Prince de Guermantes was, I would have been one of a very peculiar sort, seeking that beauty which is independent of the "value" of a book, properly speaking, and which it possesses for booklovers because of their knowing the libraries it has passed through, or that it was given to this or that famous man by this or that sovereign on the occasion of some special event, and through their having followed it from sale to sale throughout its career; this historic beauty of a book, so to speak, would not be lost for me. But I would more gladly extract it from the history of my own life than merely as a connoisseur and for me it would often reside, not in one specific copy, but in the work itself, as in this *François le Champi,* which I had contemplated for the first time in my little room at Combray during what was, perhaps, the sweetest and the saddest night

of my life (when I had, alas—at a time when the mysterious Guermantes seemed to me very inaccessible—obtained from my parents the initial abdication, from which I can date the decline in my health and my will power and the daily increasing habit of postponing a difficult task) and rediscovered to-day in the Guermantes library on the most beautiful day of my life, as it happened, when a great light suddenly shone, not only on the old gropings of my thought, but even on the purpose of my life and, perhaps, of art itself. As for the individual volumes themselves, I would, by the way, have been able to take an interest in them, but only by giving living meanings to the terms. The first edition of a work would have been more precious to me than the others, but I would have understood by that the edition in which I read it for the first time. I would look for original editions, by which I mean editions from which I received an original impression. For the later impressions are no longer original. I would seek for the novels old-fashioned bindings, of the time when I read my first novels, in those days when my father used so often to say to me, "Stand up straight." Like the dress in which we saw a woman for the first time, they would help me recapture the love that filled me then, the first beauty, on which I have superposed so many images, less and less dear, trying to recapture the first one when I am not the "I" who saw them and must give place to the "I" which I was at that time in order that he may call forth the thing he knew, which my present self does not know at all. And the library I would build up in this way would be even more precious, for the books I read in years past in Combray, in Venice, now enriched by memory with vast illuminations representing the church of Saint-Hilaire, the gondola tied fast at the foot of San Giorgio Maggiore on the Grand Canal encrusted with sparkling sapphires, would have become worthy of those old illustrated books, those Bibles in story form, which the booklover never opens in order to read the text but to charm himself again with the colours added to it by some rival of Fouquet, which give the volume

all its value. And yet, after all, not to open the books one read in earlier days except to look at illustrations with which they were not embellished at that time would still seem to me so dangerous that I would not be tempted to be a book collector even in the sense I have described, the only one I could understand. I know too well how easily the pictures left by the mind can be effaced by the mind. For the old ones it substitutes new ones which do not have the same power of resurrection. If I still possessed the copy of *François le Champi* which Mamma one evening took out of the package of books my grandmother was to give me for my birthday, I would never look at it; I would be too afraid of inserting in it little by little my impressions of to-day, covering completely those of former years; I would be too afraid of seeing it become so completely a thing of the present that, when I asked it to call forth again the child who spelled out its title in the little room at Combray, not recognising its voice, he might not respond any longer to its call and might remain forever buried in oblivion.

* * *

The idea of a popular art, like that of a patriotic art, seemed to me ridiculous, even if it had not been dangerous. If it was a question of making art accessible to the people, the perfections of form, "good for the idle class," were sacrificed. Now, I had been among society folk enough to know that they, not the electrical workers, are the real illiterates. In this respect, an art popular in form would have been more properly designed for the members of the Jockey Club than the Confédération Générale du Travail. As to subjects, the common people are carried away by popular novels just about as much as children are by the books written specially for them. In one's reading one seeks to get out of the ordinary environment, and workingmen are as much interested in princes as princes are in workingmen. At the very beginning of the war M. Barrès declared that the artist (in this case it was Titian) should first of all serve the glory

of his country. But he can serve it only by being an artist or, in other words, on condition that when he is studying the laws of Art, making his experiments and his discoveries, as delicate as those of Science, he think of nothing—not even his country—except the truth that is before him. Let us not imitate the Revolutionists who out of "civic spirit" scorned, if they did not actually destroy, the works of Watteau and La Tour, painters who were a greater honour to France than all the artists of the Revolution. Anatomy is, perhaps, not what a tender-hearted person would select if he had the choice. It was not out of the kindness of his virtuous heart —and he was very kind—that Choderlos de Laclos wrote *Les Liaisons Dangereuses,* nor because of his liking for the *petite bourgeoisie*—or the *grande,* either—that Flaubert selected for subjects those of *Madame Bovary* and *L'Education Sentimentale.* Some said that the art of a period of hurry would be concise—just as others predicted before the war that it would not last long. In like manner the railroad was to kill meditation, it was useless to long for the days of stage-coaches; but the automobile performs their functions and again sets the tourists down near the abandoned churches.

An image presented by life brings us in reality at that moment multiple and varying sensations. For example, the sight of the cover of a book one has previously read retains, woven into the letters of its title, the moonbeams of a far-off summer night. The fragrance of the morning cup of coffee brings us that vague hope of fair weather which so often in former years smiled at us in the bright uncertainty of early day as we drank our coffee from a bowl of creamy white china, crinkled like coagulated milk. An hour is not merely an hour. It is a vase filled with perfumes, sounds, plans and climates. What we call reality is a certain relationship between these sensations and the memories which surround us at the same time (a relationship that is destroyed by a bare cinematographic presentation, which gets further away from the truth the more closely it claims to adhere to it) the only true relationship, which the writer must recap-

ture so that he may forever link together in his phrase its two distinct elements. One may list in an interminable description the objects that figured in the place described, but truth will begin only when the writer takes two different objects, establishes their relationship—analogous in the world of art to the sole relationship in the world of science, the law of cause and effect—and encloses them in the necessary rings of a beautiful style, or even when, like life itself, comparing similar qualities in two sensations, he makes their essential nature stand out clearly by joining them in a metaphor, in order to remove them from the contingencies of time, and links them together with the indescribable bond of an alliance of words. From this point of view regarding the true path of art, was not nature herself a beginning of art, she who had often allowed me to know the beauty of something only a long time afterwards and only through something else—midday at Combray through the sound of its bells, the mornings at Doncières through the hiccoughs of our hot-water furnace? The relationship may be uninteresting, the objects mediocre and the style bad, but without that relationship there is nothing. The literature that is satisfied merely to "describe things," to furnish a miserable listing of their lines and surfaces, is, notwithstanding its pretensions to realism, the farthest removed from reality, the one that most impoverishes and saddens us, even though it speak of nought but glory and greatness, for it sharply cuts off all communication of our present self with the past, the essence of which the objects preserve, and with the future, in which they stimulate us to enjoy the past again. But there was more than that, I reflected. If reality were merely that by-product of existence, so to speak, approximately identical for everybody—because, when we say "bad weather, war, cab-stand, brightly lighted restaurant, garden in bloom," everyone knows what we mean—if reality were that, then naturally a sort of cinematographic film of these things would be enough and the "style" or the "literature" that departed from their simple theme would be an artificial

hors d'œuvre. But was that truly reality? If I tried to analyse for myself just what takes place in us at the moment when something makes a certain impression on us—as, for example, that day when, as I crossed the bridge over the Vivonne, the shadow of a cloud on the water made me exclaim, "Zut alors!" as I leaped for joy; or when, as I listened to a remark of Bergotte's, all that I caught of my impression was this, which was not particularly appropriate to him: "It's very fine"; or when, irritated by some discourtesy, Bloch uttered these words, not at all suited to such a vulgar experience: "It is simply incredible that anyone would behave that way"; or when, flattered at having been cordially received at the Guermantes' and, besides, a bit flustered by their wines, I could not keep from saying to myself half aloud as I left them, "Just the same, they're charming people, with whom it would be delightful to pass one's life"—I perceived that, to describe these impressions, to write that essential book, the only true book, a great writer does not need to invent it, in the current sense of the term, since it already exists in each one of us, but merely to translate it. The duty and the task of a writer are those of translator.

Now while, in cases involving the inaccurate language of injured pride for example, the straightening out of the subjective *oratio obliqua* (which diverges farther and farther from the first impression, which was a cerebral one) until it coincides with the straight line that should have started from the impression, is an arduous process against which our indolence sets up a sullen resistance, there are other cases—where love is involved, for instance—in which this operation becomes positively painful. All our feigned indifference, our indignation against the very natural falsehoods —so like those we resort to ourselves—in a word, all that we have said again and again whenever we were unhappy or betrayed, not only to the beloved one but even, while waiting to see her, continually to ourselves and sometimes

even aloud, breaking the silence of our bedroom with such phrases as, "No, really, such conduct is intolerable," or "I have consented to see you again, but for the last time, and I will not deny that it makes me very sad"—to bring all that back to the truth, based on what we really felt and from which it has wandered so far, means doing away with all that we clung to most strongly, all that formed the content of our impassioned conversations face to face with ourselves, in the midst of feverish plans for letters and other steps to be taken.

Even in our artistic enjoyment, although sought after for the impressions it gives, we are very quickly content to leave those impressions aside as something that cannot be expressed and confine our attention to those phases which allow us to experience the pleasure without analysing the sensations thoroughly, while thinking that we are communicating them to others with similar tastes, with whom we shall be able to converse because we shall be talking to them of something which is the same for them as for us, the personal root of our own impression having been eliminated. At the very times when we are the most dispassionate observers of nature, of society, love, even art itself, since every impression has two parts, one of them incorporated in the object and the other prolonged within ourselves and therefore knowable only to us, we are quick to neglect the latter, that is to say, the one part to which we ought to devote our attention, and consider only the other half, which, being outside ourselves, cannot be studied deeply and consequently never will cause us any fatiguing exertion; the slight groove that a musical phrase or the sight of a church made in our consciousness we find it too difficult to try to comprehend. But we play the symphony again and again or keep returning to look at the church, until, in this running away from our own life which we have not the courage to face—they call this "erudition"—we come to know them as well, and in the same manner, as the most learned lover of music or

archæology. How many there are, consequently, who stop at that point and extract nothing from their impression, but go to their graves useless and unsatisfied, like celibates of art. They are tormented by the same regrets as virgins and idlers, regrets that fecund labour would dispel. They are more wrought up over works of art than the real artists, because they do not labour arduously to get to the bottom of their emotional state and therefore it is diffused in outward expression, puts heat into their remarks and blood into their faces; they think they are doing something really great when, after the execution of a work they like, they shout vociferously "Bravo, bravo!" But these manifestations do not force them to seek light on the nature of their love; they do not know what it really is. Meanwhile, this unexpended passion exuberates into even their calmest conversation and leads them to indulge in grand gestures, facial contortions and noddings of the head when they talk of art. "I have been at a concert where they played some music which, I admit, did not thrill me. Then the quartette began and, *nom d'une pipe,* that was another story!" (Here the music lover's face assumes an anxious expression, as if he were saying to himself, "Why, I see sparks, I smell something burning; there must be a fire somewhere!") "Good Lord! what a difference! It was exasperating, it was badly written, but it was stunning! It was not something everybody could appreciate." And yet, ridiculous though these devotees may be, they are not entirely to be scorned. They are nature's first efforts in the process of evolving the artist; they are as shapeless and lacking in viability as the earliest animals, which preceded the present species and were not so constituted as to be able to survive. These weak-willed, sterile dabblers should arouse our sympathy like those first contrivances which were not able to leave the ground, but in which there was, not yet the means, secret and still to be discovered, but at any rate the desire, to fly. "And let me tell you, old man," adds the dilettante, as he takes your arm, "that's the eighth time I've heard it and I promise

you, it won't be the last." And in truth, since they fail to assimilate the really nourishing part of art, they suffer from a continual need of artistic enjoyment, a gnawing hunger that nothing can satisfy. So they go and applaud the same work for a long time at a stretch, believing also that in being present they are performing a duty, an act of piety, as others regard their attendance at a meeting of a Board of Directors or a funeral. Then come works of a different, even quite contrary, character in literature, painting or music. For the ability to launch new ideas and systems and, especially, to absorb them has always been much more widespread than genuine good taste, even among the producers of art, and this tendency is spreading considerably with the increase in the number of literary reviews and journals—and, along with them, of people who imagine they have been called to be writers and artists. There was a time, for example, when the better element of our youth, the more intelligent and more sincerely interested, no longer cared for any but works having a lofty moral and sociological, even religious significance. They had the idea that that was the criterion of the value of a work, thereby repeating the error of such as David, Chenavard, Brunetière, and others. Instead of Bergotte, whose airiest sentences, as a matter of fact, required much profounder meditation, they preferred writers who seemed more profound only because they did not write as well. "His intricate way of writing is suited only to society people," the democratically minded said, thereby paying society folk a compliment they did not deserve. But the moment our reasoning intelligence tries to judge works of art, there is no longer anything fixed or certain; one can prove anything one wishes to. Whereas the real essence of talent is a gift, an attribute of a cosmic character, the presence of which should first of all be sought for underneath the surface fashions of thought and style, it is by these latter qualities that the critics classify an author. Because of his peremptory tone and his ostentatious scorn of the school that preceded him, they put the mantle

of prophecy on a writer who has no new message to deliver. This constant aberration of the critics is such that a writer should almost prefer to be judged by the public at large (if the latter were not incapable even of understanding what an artist has attempted in a line of effort unfamiliar to it). For the talent of a great writer—which, after all, is merely an instinct religiously hearkened to (while silence is imposed on everything else) perfected and understood—has more in common with the instinctive life of the people than with the superficial verbiage and fluctuating standards of the conventionally recognised judges. Their battle of words begins all over again every ten years—for the kaleidoscope comprises not only society groups, but also social, political and religious ideas, which temporarily spread out more broadly through refraction in the large masses but nevertheless are shortlived, like all ideas whose novelty succeeds in deceiving only minds that are not very exacting as to proofs. Therefore parties and schools have followed one another, attracting to themselves always the same minds, men of only relative intelligence, always prone to partisan enthusiasms which less credulous minds, more exacting in the matter of proofs, avoid. Unfortunately the former, just because they are only half-wits, need to round out their personalities with action; therefore they are more active than the superior minds, attract the crowd and build up around themselves, not only exaggerated reputations for some, and unwarranted condemnation of others, but civil and foreign wars, which it ought to be possible to escape with a little non-royalist self-criticism. And as for the pleasure that a perfectly balanced mind, a heart that is truly alive finds in the beautiful thought of some master, it is no doubt wholly sound, but however precious may be the men who are capable of enjoying it (how many are there in twenty years?) it nevertheless reduces them to the condition of being merely the full consciousness of someone else. When a man has done everything to win the love of a woman who could only have made him unhappy and, despite repeated efforts over

many years, he has not even been able to obtain a rendezvous with her, instead of trying to describe his sufferings and the danger he has escaped, he reads and rereads this *pensée* from La Bruyère, annotating it with "a million words" and the most moving memories of his own life: "Men often want to love and do not know how to succeed in so doing; they seek defeat but are not able to find it, so that, if I may so express it, they are forced to remain free." Whether he who wrote that *pensée* intended it so or not (and then it should read "be loved," instead of "love," and it would be finer that way) it is certain that the sensitive man of letters referred to gives it life, fills it with meaning to the point of bursting and cannot repeat it without overflowing with joy to find it so true and beautiful, and yet he has added hardly anything to it and there remains merely the *pensée* of La Bruyère.

How could documentary realism have any value at all, since it is underneath little details such as it notes down that reality is hidden—the grandeur in the distant sound of an airplane or in the lines of the spires of Saint-Hilaire, the past contained in the savour of a *madeleine,* and so forth —and they have no meaning if one does not extract it from them.

Stored up little by little in our memory, it is the chain of all the inaccurate impressions, in which there is nothing left of what we really experienced, which constitutes for us our thoughts, our life, reality, and a so-called "art taken from life" would simply reproduce that lie, an art as thin and poor as life itself, without any beauty, a repetition of what our eyes see and our intelligence notes, so wearisome and futile that one is at a loss to understand where the artist who devotes himself to that finds the joyous, energising spark that can stimulate him to activity and enable him to go forward with his task. The grandeur of real art, on the contrary, art that M. de Norpois would have called "a pastime for dilettanti," is to rediscover, grasp again and lay before us that reality from which we live so far removed

and from which we become more and more separated as the formal knowledge which we substitute for it grows in thickness and imperviousness—that reality which there is grave danger we might die without ever having known and yet which is simply our life, life as it really is, life disclosed at last and made clear, consequently the only life that is really lived, that life which in one sense is to be found at every moment in every man, as well as in the artist. But men fail to see it because they do not try to get light on it. And thus their past is encumbered with countless photographic negatives which lie there useless because the intelligence has not "developed" them. To grasp again our life—and also the life of others; for style is for the writer, as for the painter, a question, not of technique but of vision. It is the revelation—impossible by direct and conscious means—of the qualitative differences in the way the world appears to us, differences which, but for art, would remain the eternal secret of each of us. Only by art can we get outside ourselves, know what another sees of this universe, which is not the same as ours and the different views of which would otherwise have remained as unknown to us as those there may be on the moon. Thanks to art, instead of seeing only one world, our own, we see it under multiple forms, and as many as there are original artists, just so many worlds have we at our disposal, differing more widely from one another than those that roll through infinite space, and years after the glowing center from which they emanated has been extinguished, be it called Rembrandt or Vermeer, they continue to send us their own rays of light.

This work of the artist, to seek to discern something different underneath material, experience, words, is exactly the reverse of the process which, during every minute that we live with our attention diverted from ourselves, is being carried on within us by pride, passion, intelligence and also by our habits, when they hide our true impressions from us by burying them under the mass of nomenclatures and practical aims which we erroneously call life. After all, that

art, although so complicated, is actually the only living art. It alone expresses to others and discloses to us our own life, that life which cannot be "observed" and the visible manifestations of which need to be translated and often read backwards and deciphered with much effort. But all the work of our pride, our passion, our imitative spirit, our abstract intelligence, art will undo and will make us retrace our steps and return to the depths of our own selves, where what has really existed lies unknown to us. And it is, indeed, alluring, this task of re-creating the true life and reviving the youthful freshness of our impressions, but it calls for courage of every sort—even sentimental—for it means, first of all, giving up our dearest illusions, ceasing to believe in the objectivity of what we have ourselves built up, and instead of lulling ourselves for the hundredth time with the words, "She was very sweet," reading behind all this, "I enjoyed having her in my embrace." It is true, what I experienced in those hours of love, all men undergo likewise. One goes through an experience, but what one has felt is like these negatives which shew nothing but black until they have been held up before a lamp and they, too, must be looked at from the reverse side; one has no idea what they contain until they have been held up before the intelligence, and only when it has thrown light upon them and intellectualised them do we distinguish—and with what effort!—the outline of what we have felt. But I also realised that the suffering I had at first undergone with Gilberte at the thought that our love does not belong to the one who inspires it, is incidentally salutary as a means to an end. For, however short our life is to be, it is only while we are suffering that our thoughts, as though stirred by perpetual, changing movements, bring up within our range of vision, as in a storm, all that boundless world, governed by laws, but of which we had no view from our ill-placed window, for the calm of happiness leaves it all too smooth and below our range of vision; perhaps only in a few great geniuses does this up-surging constantly go on without their having

need to be stirred by suffering; and yet, perhaps, when we study the abundant and regular development of their joyous work, we are too much inclined to infer that their lives were joyful also, whereas, on the contrary, they may have been continually filled with sorrow. But the principal reason is that, if we do not love solely a Gilberte, then what made us suffer so keenly was not that we loved also an Albertine, but that our love is a portion of our soul more lasting than the various selves which die successively in us and which would selfishly like to retain this love—a portion of our soul which, regardless of the useful suffering this may cause us, must detach itself from its human objects in order to make clear to us and restore its quality of generality and give this love, an understanding of this love, to all the world, to the universal intelligence, and not first to this woman, then to that, in whom this one and that of our successive selves seek to lose their identity.

My task, then, I reflected, was to re-establish the significance of even the slightest signs by which I was surrounded (the Guermantes, Albertine, Gilberte, Saint-Loup, Balbec and so forth) long familiarity having destroyed their meaning for me. We have to bear in mind that when we shall have attained reality, we shall not be able to express it and preserve it for all time unless we put aside all that is different from it and is being continually suggested to us by the haste that comes from habit. More than anything else, I would exclude, therefore, all those remarks that come from the lips rather than the mind, clever remarks such as one makes in conversation and which, after a long conversation with others, one continues to utter in imaginary discussions with oneself, so that they fill the mind with lies, those entirely mechanical remarks which any writer who so lowers himself as to use them accompanies with a little smile, a little grimace such as constantly disfigures the spoken phrase of a Sainte-Beuve, for example, whereas real books must be the product, not of broad daylight and small talk but of darkness and silence. And since art is a faithful

re-composing of life, around the verities which one has finally found within oneself there will always float an atmosphere of poetry, the sweetness of a mystery which is only the last traces of the semi-darkness we have had to pass through, the measure of the profundity of a work of art, indicated with precision as by a depth gauge. (For this profundity is not inherent in certain subjects, as some materialistically spiritualist novelists believe because they themselves cannot go below the world of outward appearances, and all their noble intentions, like the virtuous harangues characteristic of certain people incapable of the slightest kindly effort, should not blind us to the fact that they have not had strength of mind enough even to rid themselves of all the hackneyed forms acquired by imitation.

As for the truths which the intelligence—even that of the finest minds—garners right out in the open, lying before it in broad daylight, their value may be very great, but they have harsher outlines and are all on the surface, with no depth, because no depths had to be penetrated in order to get to them and they have not been re-created. Often writers in whom one no longer discerns these mysterious truths, after a certain age write only with their intelligence, which has acquired more and more power; for this reason the books of their mature period have more force than those of their youth, but no longer the same velvety smoothness.

And yet I felt that these truths which the intelligence draws directly from reality are not entirely to be scorned, for it may be that they enchase, in a grosser substance, it is true, but nevertheless pierce with understanding those impressions which are brought to us, outside of all considerations of time, by the essential qualities common to sensations of the past and the present, but which, being more precious, are too rare for the work of art to be composed wholly of them. I felt surging within me a multitude of truths concerning passions, characters and customs which might well serve in that manner. Every person who makes us suffer we can associate with a divinity, of which that person

is only a fragmentary reflexion—the lowest step of the approach to the temple, as it were—and the contemplation of this divinity as a pure idea gives us instant joy in place of the sorrow we were suffering; the entire art of living consists in making use of those who cause us suffering only as so many steps enabling us to draw nearer to its divine form and thus daily people our life with divinities. The perception of these truths brought me joy, and yet I seemed to remember that more than one of them I had discovered through suffering and others in the midst of very commonplace pleasures. And then a new light dawned within me, less brilliant, it is true, than the one which had disclosed to me that the work of art is our only means of recapturing the past. And I understood that all these materials for literary work were nothing else than my past life and that they had come to me in the midst of frivolous pleasures, in idleness, through tender affection and through sorrow, and that I had stored them up without foreseeing their final purpose or even their survival, any more than does the seed when it lays by all the sustenance that is going to nourish the seedling. Like the seed, I might die as soon as the plant had been formed, and I found that I had been living for this seedling without knowing it, without any indication whatsoever that my life would ever witness the realisation of those books I so longed to write but for which I used to find no subject when I sat down at my table. And so my entire life up to that day could—and, from another point of view, could not—be summed up under the title, *A Vocation*. It could not, in the sense that literature had not played any part in my life as yet. But it could, on the other hand, in that my life, the memories of its sorrows and its joys, constituted a reserve after the manner of the albumen stored in the ovule of plants, from which it draws its nutrition in order to develop into a seed, long before there is anything to shew that the embryo of a plant is developing, although it is the repository of secret but very active chemical and respiratory phenomena. Thus my life was in contact with

the forces that would bring about its maturation, and those who might in after years draw sustenance from it would know nothing of what had been done for their nourishment, just as those who eat the edible grains little know that the rich substances they contain first nourished the seed and made possible its development. In this matter the same comparison may be false as a starting-point but true as a conclusion. The writer envies the painter; he would like to take sketches and notes—he is ruined as a writer if he does so. But when he writes, there is not a gesture of one of his characters, not a single nervous mannerism or intonation that was not suggested to him by his memory; there is not a single fictitious name of a character under which he could not write the names of sixty persons he has actually seen, one of whom posed for the grimace, another for the monocle, this one for the anger, that one for the becoming movement of the arm, and so on. And then the writer realises that, if his dream of being a painter could not come true in a conscious and intentional manner, it has happened to come true anyhow, and the writer finds that he, too, has been making a sketchbook without knowing it. For, impelled by the instinct that was in him, long before he thought he might some day be a writer, he systematically ignored so many things which caught the attention of others that he was accused of being absent-minded and himself thought that he could neither listen nor observe. But all the while he was instructing his eyes and ears to retain forever what seemed to the others to be childish trifles—the tone in which a sentence had been spoken, the facial expression and movement of the shoulders of someone about whom perhaps he knows nothing else—all this many years ago and only because he had heard that tone of voice before or felt that he might hear it again, that it was something enduring, something which might recur; it is the feeling for the general which in the future writer automatically selects what is general and can therefore enter into a work of art. For he has listened to the others only when, however mad

or foolish they were, by repeating parrot-like what people of like character say, they had thereby become the prophet-birds, the spokesmen for a psychological law. He retains in his memory only what is of a general character. By such intonations, such play of the features, such movements of the shoulders, even if they were seen in his now distant childhood, the life of others is pictured in his mind and when, later on, he comes to write, it will be useful to him for re-creating reality either by composing a movement of the shoulders common to many (and as true to life as if it had been taken down in the notebook of an anatomist, but sketched in this case to express a psychological truth) or by attaching to that movement of the shoulders a movement of the neck characteristic of someone else, each of them having contributed his pose of an instant.

It is quite possible that, to produce a literary work, imagination and sensibility are interchangeable qualities and that the latter can, without much disadvantage, be substituted for the former, just as people whose stomach is unable to digest food charge their intestines with this function. A man born sensitive to impressions but without imagination, might nevertheless write admirable novels. The suffering caused him by others, his attempts to forestall it, the conflicts provoked by his suffering and the other cruel person—all that, interpreted by his intelligence, might furnish the material for a book not only as fine as if it had been imagined and invented, but also as completely foreign to the author's reveries as if he had been absorbed in himself and happy, as surprising to him and as much the product of chance as an accidental caprice of the imagination. Even the human beings most stupid as to gestures, remarks and spontaneously expressed sentiments demonstrate laws that they are not aware of but which the artist unexpectedly discovers in them. Because of his studies of this type, the common herd considers the writer unkind, but without justification because in a ridiculous trait the artist sees a splendid generality, which he does not count to the discredit of the person under

observation any more than the surgeon would despise him for being afflicted with a rather frequent disturbance of the circulation. That is why the artist scoffs at ridiculous traits less than anyone else. Unfortunately, he is more unhappy than unkind when it comes to his own strong feelings; although he knows quite as well their general character, it is less easy for him to free himself of the personal suffering they cause. Of course, when some insolent fellow insults us, we would have preferred that he praise us; and still more, when a woman we adore betrays us, what would we not give to have it otherwise! But our resentment of the insult, our grief over the desertion will then prove to be strange lands which we would otherwise never have known and the discovery of which, however painful to the man, becomes priceless to the artist. And that is why the mean-spirited and the ingrate figure in his work, in spite of him and them. The pamphleteer involuntarily shares his fame with the rascal he has pilloried. One can recognise in every work of art the men whom the artist has hated most intensely and, alas, even the women he has loved most deeply. The latter were only posing for the writer at the very moment when, against his will, they were causing him the most suffering. When I was in love with Albertine, I realised clearly that she did not love me and I was forced to reconcile myself to merely learning from her what it is to experience suffering, love and, at first, even happiness. And when we endeavour to extract the general qualities from our sorrow and to write about it, we are somewhat consoled, perhaps for a still different reason from any of those I have given here, which is that thinking in terms of generalities and writing comprise for the writer a healthful and indispensable function, the fulfilling of which brings happiness, as do for a man of a physical type exercise, sweating and the bath. To be frank, I rebelled somewhat against that. It is true, I believed that the supreme truth of life is in art; it is true, on the other hand, that I was no more capable of the effort of memory which would have been required to

love Albertine again than to mourn again for my grandmother; nevertheless I questioned whether a work of art of which they should have no knowledge would accomplish anything for them, for the destiny of these dear departed ones. My grandmother, whom I with such indifference had seen go through her last agony and die close beside me—oh, might I in expiation, when my work should be completed, wounded beyond relief and abandoned by all, suffer for long and weary hours before I died! In addition, I felt infinite pity even for beings less dear, even for those to whom I was indifferent, and for so many human destinies the suffering and even the absurdities of which my thought had made use of as it endeavoured to understand them. All these beings, who had revealed truths to me and who were no longer living, seemed to me to have lived lives that had benefited no one but me, and to have died for me. It was sad for me to think that my love, which had meant so much to me, would be so detached in my book from any person that different readers would make it apply closely to the love they had felt for other women. But should I be shocked at this posthumous infidelity, or that this or that man might substitute unknown women as objects of the sentiments expressed in my book, when this infidelity and this division of love among several beings had begun in my lifetime and even before I had started to write? I had suffered much for Gilberte, for Mme. de Guermantes and for Albertine in succession. Successively, too, I had forgotten them, and only my love itself, addressed to, bestowed on different beings, had been enduring. The profanation of one of my memories by unknown readers I had already consummated ahead of them. I was not far from feeling horror of myself, as might some nationalist party in whose name hostilities had been carried on and which alone had benefited from a war in which so many noble victims had suffered and succumbed without even knowing the outcome of the struggle—which would have been such a compensation to my grandmother, at least. And the only consolation for her not knowing that

I was finally setting myself to work was that—such is the lot of the dead—even if she could not rejoice in my progress, at least she had long since ceased to be conscious of my inactivity, of my wasted life, which had been such a sorrow to her. And certainly there would not be only my grandmother and Albertine, but many others besides, from whom I had appropriated a word or a glance but whom I no longer recalled as individual creatures. A book is a great cemetery in which one can no longer decipher the half-effaced names on most of the graves. Sometimes, on the contrary, one recalls the name very well but cannot remember whether anything of the person himself survives in these pages. That young girl with the deep-set eyes and the indolent manner of speech, is she here? And if she does lie here, one no longer knows in what part and how can one find out under all the flowers? But since we live withdrawn from individual human beings, since we soon forget our strongest feelings, such as my love for my grandmother and for Albertine, and they become for us no more than a word we do not understand and we are able to talk of them with society folk, to whose houses we are still glad to go, albeit those we loved are all dead, then if there exists a way for us to learn to understand these forgotten words, should we not employ it, even though it be necessary first to transcribe them into a universal language, which at any rate will be permanent and would make of our lost ones, in the truest essence of their natures, an eternal acquisition for all human beings? And even this law of change, which made those words unintelligible for us, if we succeed in explaining it, does not our inferiority become a new source of strength? Furthermore, the work in which our sorrows have collaborated can be interpreted both as an evil omen of suffering yet to come and as a happy sign of consolation in the future. In truth, when we say that his loves and his sorrows have been helpful to the poet and have aided him to construct his work, that unknown women have quite unsuspectingly, one with a meanness, another with a mockery, brought each her

stone for the building of the monument they will never see, we do not sufficiently take into consideration that the life of the writer does not end with this work, that the same temperament which caused him to undergo certain sufferings which have been incorporated in his work will continue to exist after the work is completed and will lead him to fall in love with other women under conditions which would be the same if time did not modify them slightly with regard to the circumstances, the object of his affection, his hunger for love and his resistance to suffering. Viewed as an omen of misfortune, the work should be regarded solely as an unhappy love which is the certain forerunner of others and will result in the poet's life resembling his work, so that he will have scarcely any more need to write, such a faithful forecast of what is to come will he be able to find in what he has already written. Thus my love for Albertine, with all its points of difference, was already recorded in advance in my love for Gilberte, in the midst of those happy days when Albertine's aunt first mentioned her name and described her to me, without my suspecting that this insignificant germ would develop and one day engross my whole existence. But from another point of view, the work is a promise of happiness, because it teaches us that in every love the general is to be found beside the particular and that we should pass from the latter to the former by an exercise which fortifies us against suffering by shewing us how to ignore its cause and study deeply its essential nature. And in truth, as I was to find out by experience later on, even at the very time the artist loves and suffers, if he has finally achieved his true vocation, during the hours of work he feels so clearly the loved one merge into a vaster reality that he finally comes to forget her at times and to suffer no more from his love while at his work than as though it were some purely physical malady in which the loved one had no part, a sort of cardiac ailment. It is true that this is only for a few moments now and then, and the effect seems to be quite the opposite if the congenial work comes later.

For when the human beings who by their evil character or their lack of character managed, in spite of us, to destroy our illusions have themselves been reduced to nothingness and separated from the amorous delusion we had constructed for ourselves, if then we set ourselves to work, our soul resuscitates these beings and, for our own purposes of self-analysis, considers them the same as others who had loved us, and in this case literature, taking up again the abandoned labours of the amorous illusion, confers a sort of renewal of life on sentiments that had already ceased to exist. It is true, we are obliged to go through our own individual suffering again, with the courage of the doctor who repeats on himself the dangerous inoculation. But at the same time we have to represent it to ourselves in a general form and this enables us to a certain extent to escape its strangling grip, makes the whole world share in our suffering with us and is not without even a certain joy. When life walls us in, our intelligence cuts an opening, for, though there be no remedy for an unrequited love, one can win release from suffering, even if only by drawing from it the lessons it has to teach. The intelligence does not recognise in life any closed situations without an outlet. Therefore, since nothing can last if it does not become general or if the mind lies to itself, I was forced to resign myself to the idea that even those dearest to the writer were in the last analysis merely posing for him, as it is with painters. Sometimes, when a painful study has been left merely sketched in, a new affection or fresh suffering comes to help us fill it in and complete it. As to those great sorrows which serve a useful purpose, we have not much cause for complaint, for there is no lack of them, they come in quick succession. Nevertheless, we should hasten to take advantage of them, for they do not last very long because we quickly console ourselves or else, when they are too violent and the heart is not very strong, we die. In love, our fortunate rival—otherwise styled our enemy—is really our benefactor. To someone who had aroused in us merely an

insignificant physical desire, he immediately adds an immense value, foreign to her, it is true, but which we attribute to her. If we had no rivals, physical pleasure would not develop into love—if we had none or did not think we had, for it is not necessary that they really exist. Sufficient for our good is the illusory existence bestowed on purely imaginary rivals by our suspicions and our jealousy. Happiness is beneficial for the body but it is grief that develops the powers of the mind. Moreover, even if it did not each time disclose to us a law, it would nevertheless be indispensable for bringing us back to the truth, forcing us to take things in serious vein, by uprooting each time the tangled growth of habits, skepticism, flippancy, indifference. It is true that grief, which is not compatible with happiness or health, is sometimes prejudicial also to life. In the end, sorrow kills. At each fresh, overpowering shock we feel another vein stand out and develop its deadly swellings along our temples, beneath our eyes. Thus were produced little by little those terrible, grief-ravaged faces of the aged Rembrandt and the aged Beethoven, whom everyone used to scoff at. And the pouches under the eyes and wrinkles on the brow would be nothing if there were not also the suffering in the heart. But since forces can change their nature and sustained heat become light and the electricity of lightning record a photograph, since the dull ache at our heart can raise, as it were, a banner for each fresh sorrow, the permanent symbol of an inner image, let us accept the physical injury it inflicts because of the spiritual wisdom that it brings; let us allow our body to disintegrate, since each fresh particle that breaks off, now luminous and decipherable, comes and adds itself to our work to complete it at the cost of suffering superfluous to others more gifted and to make it more and more substantial as emotions gradually chip away our life. Ideas take the place of sorrows; when the latter are transformed into ideas, they at once lose part of their noxious effect on the heart and from the very first moment the transformation itself radiates

joy. But ideas succeed sorrows only as a matter of chronology, for the idea would seem to be the original element, and the sorrow only the form under which certain ideas first enter our consciousness. But there are several families in the group of ideas and some are joys from the very start. These reflexions suggested to me a more vigorous and more correct meaning for the truth I had often dimly felt, especially when Mme. de Cambremer used to wonder how I could neglect the company of a remarkable man like Elstir for that of Albertine. Even from the intellectual point of view I felt that she was wrong, but I did not realise that what she failed to understand was the kind of lessons a man of letters needs in serving his apprenticeship. For that the objective value of the arts is meagre; what it is necessary to draw out, to bring forth into the light, is our feelings, our passions—that is to say, the passions and feelings of everyone. A woman for whom we have a great longing causes us suffering, draws from us long series of feelings far more profound and vital than would an exceptional man who has aroused our interest. It remains to be determined, dependent upon the plane on which we live, whether we consider that a certain betrayal by which a woman has made us suffer is of little consequence compared to the truths this betrayal has disclosed to us, which the woman, happy to have made us suffer, could scarcely have comprehended. In any case there is no lack of these betrayals; the writer may embark upon a long work without apprehension. Let the intelligence but begin its task and there will come up along the way sorrows in plenty which will undertake to complete it. As for happiness, it has hardly more than one useful quality, namely to make unhappiness possible. In our happiness, we should form very sweet bonds, full of confidence and attachment, in order that the sundering of them may cause us that priceless rending of the heart which is called unhappiness. If one had not been happy, though only in hope and anticipation, the misfortunes would have no cruelty and therefore no good result. And just as the

painter needs to study many churches in order to paint one, even more so must the writer who wishes to acquire volume, substance, generalness, literary reality, study many human beings for a single sentiment, for if it is true that "art is long and life is fleeting," one can on the other hand say that, if inspiration is fleeting, the sentiments it has to paint are not much more lasting. It is our moments of suffering that outline our books and the intervals of respite that write them. When our inspiration revives and we are able to take up our work again, the woman who posed for us for a certain sentiment is already no longer able to make us feel it. We have to complete her portrait from another model and, even though this involve infidelity to the first woman, there is no great disadvantage in these substitutions from the literary point of view, thanks to the similarity of our feelings, which makes a book at the same time a record of our past loves and a chronicle of our new ones. That is one of the reasons for the worthlessness of those studies which seek to discover the originals of the personages in a book. For a book, even one of outright confession, is interpolated between various episodes of the author's life, those before it, which inspired it, and those which come after and resemble it quite as much, the details of the later loves being closely patterned on the earlier ones. For we are more faithful to our own selves than even to the one we have the most deeply loved, and we forget her in time and fall in love again, since that is one of the traits of our character. At the very most the woman we loved so deeply added an individual form to this love which will hold us faithful to her even in our infidelity. With the next woman we shall feel the same need of morning walks or of accompanying her home at the end of the day or of giving her far too much money. (It is a curious thing, this circulation of the money we give to women who because of that make us unhappy, that is to say, make it possible for us to write books; one might almost say that works of art, like artesian wells, mount higher in proportion as the suffering has more

deeply pierced the heart.) These substitutions give the book an impersonal, more general character and this is at the same time a stern admonition that we should not devote our attention to persons but to ideas, which have a real existence and are therefore susceptible of expression. And even at that the writer must hasten and not waste time while he has these models at his disposal. For those who pose to represent happiness seldom have many sittings to give us. But those who pose for sorrow grant us many sittings in that studio to which we repair only at those times, our inner self. Those periods are, as it were, a representation of our life with its various sorrows, for they also contain different sorrows and a new one, new in every meaning of the word, just when we thought calm had come, perhaps because these unforeseen situations force us to come more deeply into contact with ourselves; these painful dilemmas which love continually presents instruct us and gradually disclose to us the substance of which we are made.

Furthermore, even when suffering does not supply, by disclosing it to us, the subject matter of our work, it is useful by impelling us to undertake it. Imagination and reflexion may be admirable machines in themselves but they may stand idle unless suffering furnishes the motive power. Therefore when Françoise, seeing Albertine enjoy the free run of my house like a pet dog, turn everything upside down, involve me in too heavy expense and cause me so much heartache, said to me (for at that time I had already written some articles and a few translations), "Ah, if, instead of that hussy who makes you waste your time, you had taken on a refined young man to act as secretary and keep all those old papers in order," I was, perhaps, mistaken in thinking she was talking wisely. By making me waste my time and by causing me unhappiness Albertine had perhaps been more useful to me, even from the literary point of view, than a private secretary who might have arranged my "old papers" in an orderly file. But nevertheless, when a living being—and perhaps in nature that creature is man—is so poorly

constituted that he cannot love without suffering and must suffer in order to learn new truths, the existence of such a creature becomes very wearying in the long run. Happy years are wasted years; we wait for suffering before setting to work. The idea of suffering as an ineluctable prerequisite has become associated in our minds with the idea of work; we dread each new undertaking because of the suffering we know we must first go through to formulate it in our imagination. And when we understand that suffering is the best thing we can encounter in life, we contemplate death without dismay as a sort of emancipation. However, if I was inclined to rebel at that thought, I still had to take into consideration that very often we have not played with life, made the most of our human contacts for the benefit of our books, but quite the contrary. The case of Werther, such a noble one, was not, alas, my own. Without believing an instant in Albertine's love, I had wanted to commit suicide for her a score of times, I had ruined myself for her financially and physically. When it comes to writing, we take infinite pains, we examine very closely, we reject whatever is not true. But when it is merely our life that is at stake, we ruin ourselves, wreck our health, commit suicide for a lot of lies. It is true that (if one has passed the poetic age) it is from the gangue of those lies that one can extract just a little truth. Our sorrows are obscure, despised servants, whom we struggle against but who gain more and more dominion over us, wretched but irreplaceable servants, who lead us by subterranean passages to the truth and to our death. Fortunate are they who come upon the former before they reach the latter and for whom, however closely they may follow one another, the hour of truth sounds before the call of death.

I understood also that the most trivial incidents of my earlier life had combined to teach me the lesson of idealism that was now going to be so useful to me. My meetings with M. de Charlus, for example, had enabled me—even before his pro-Germanism taught me the same lesson and

better, even, than my love for Mme. de Guermantes or for Albertine or Saint-Loup's love for Rachel—to satisfy myself that the subject is a matter of indifference and that the mind can put anything into it—a truth the importance of which is disclosed even better in the phenomenon of homosexuality, so little understood and so needlessly censured, than in that of normal love, instructive though that is. Love shows us beauty leaving the woman we no longer love and alighting on one whom others would consider most homely and who may have seemed so to us in the past and may again in the future; but it is still more surprising to see it lodge under the cap of an omnibus conductor and win the devoted worship of a noble lord, who straightway abandons a beautiful princess. My astonishment each time I saw again on the Champs-Elysées, in the street, on the beach, the face of Gilberte, of Mme. de Guermantes, of Albertine, did not that demonstrate how steadily a memory of the past diverges at a tangent from the impression with which it coincided at first but from which it draws farther and farther away? The writer should not be offended to see his heroines given masculine countenances by the invert. Only by this somewhat abnormal peculiarity can the latter then give to what he reads its full general value. If M. de Charlus had not attributed Morel's features to the "faithless one" whom Musset weeps over in *La Nuit d'Octobre* or *Souvenir,* he would have neither wept nor understood, since it was only by that route, narrow and roundabout, that he could approach the verities of love. It is only by a habit acquired in the insincere language of prefaces and dedications that the writer says "my readers." In reality, each reader reads only what is already within himself. The book is only a sort of optical instrument which the writer offers to the reader to enable the latter to discover in himself what he would not have found but for the aid of the book. It is this reading within himself what is also in the book which constitutes the proof of the accuracy of the latter and *vice versa*—at least to a certain extent, for any discrepancy between the two

texts should often be laid to the blame of the reader, not the author. Furthermore, the book may be too learned, too obscure, for the simple-minded reader and therefore provide him with only a cloudy glass, through which he will be unable to read. But other peculiarities, such as inversion, may make it necessary for the reader to read in a certain way in order to understand, and the author should not take offence but should give the reader the maximum liberty, saying to him, " See whether you read better with this glass or that, or with some other."

The interest I had always taken in dreams, was it not due to the fact that, making up in intensity what they lack in duration, they help us to understand better the subjective element in love, for example? And this simply because with prodigious swiftness they accomplish what would be vulgarly called " getting a woman inside our skin," even to the point of making us love passionately for a few minutes an ugly woman, whom in real life we could have come to love only after years of familiarity and cohabitation and with the aid of some miraculous doctor to give us intravenous injections of love—and quite as possibly of suffering also; with the same speed, the amorous suggestion which they impressed on us is dispersed and not only the nocturnal mistress ceases to exist for us as such and becomes again the ugly woman we know so well, but sometimes there is dispersed also something more precious, a fascinating composite of feelings, affection, voluptuous delight, dimly outlined regrets, a whole *Embarquement pour Cythère* of passion, whose delicate shadings of a delicious accuracy we would fain note for our awakening but which disappears from sight like a canvas too faded to be restored. And it was perhaps also by the preposterous game they play with Time that dreams had fascinated me. Had I not often seen in one night, nay, in one minute of one night, dim, remote periods of my life, so far in the past that I could scarcely distinguish any longer the feelings I had had at that time, come rushing down upon me full tilt, blinding me with their brightness, like giant airplanes

instead of the pale stars I believed them to be, bringing me again all they had once held for me, giving me the emotion, the shock, the brilliance of their immediate proximity; and then when I awoke, retrace the distance they had so miraculously crossed at one bound and even make me believe, but mistakenly, that they were one of the means of recapturing the Past?

I realised that only superficial and defective observation attaches all importance to the object, when the mind is everything; I lost my grandmother in reality many months after I had lost her in fact; I had seen persons change in appearance according to the ideas that I or others had of them, or one person appear as several, according to those who were looking at him (such, for example, as the different conceptions of Swann at the beginning of this work, depending on those who met him; or the Princesse de Luxembourg as she seemed to me and as she appeared to the *premier président*) or even when the same person looked at them after several years' interval (the variations of the name "Guermantes" for me and my different ideas of Swann). I had seen a lover attribute to his belovéd qualities that were only in himself. I had come to understand this all the better because I had altered and extended to the utmost the gap between objective reality and love (Rachel as she appeared to Saint-Loup and to me, Albertine to me and to Saint-Loup, Morel or the omnibus conductor to M. de Charlus and to others). Finally, to a certain extent the pro-Germanism of M. de Charlus, like the glance Saint-Loup cast at Albertine's photograph, had helped me free myself for a moment, if not from my Germanophobia, at least from my faith in its pure objectivity, and to make me reflect that it might be the same with hate as with love and that in the terrible judgment France is at this moment passing on Germany, whom she considers outside the pale of humanity, there is above all an objectivity of feeling such as made Rachel appear so precious to Saint-Loup and Albertine to me. What, in fact, made it possible that this perversity was

not wholly peculiar to Germany, was that, just as I as an individual had successive love affairs at the end of which the object of my love appeared worthless to me, just so I had already seen in my country successive hatreds which had, for example, held up as traitors—a thousand times worse than the Germans, into whose hands they were supposed to be delivering France—Dreyfusards like Reinach, with whom the patriots would now collaborate against a nation each member of which was necessarily a liar, a wild beast, an imbecile—except, of course, those Germans who had espoused the French cause, such as the King of Rumania or the Empress of Russia. It is true that the anti-Dreyfusards would have replied, "That's not the same thing." But as a matter of fact, it is never the same thing, any more than it is the same person; otherwise, faced with the same phenomenon, the man who is duped by it could blame only his subjective condition and would not be able to believe that the good or bad qualities are in the object itself.

The intelligence, then, has no difficulty building up a theory on this difference (unnatural teaching of the religious orders, according to the radicals; inability of the Jewish race to become assimilated; undying hatred of the Germans for the Latin race, the yellow race being for the moment restored to favour). This subjective side was noticeable, by the way, in conversation with neutrals, among whom the pro-Germans, for example, had the faculty of temporarily ceasing to understand or even to listen when one mentioned the German atrocities in Belgium. (And yet they were real.) The subjective element I had noticed in hate, as in sight itself, did not prevent the object from having real qualities and defects and did not by any means cause the reality to vanish away into pure "relativism." And if, after so many years had gone by and so much time had passed, I perceived this vital influence of the *lac interne* even in international relations, had I not suspected this at the very outset of my life when reading in the garden at Combray one of those novels by Bergotte which, if I turn a few of their forgotten pages and

read of the schemes of some evil character, I cannot lay aside until I have turned to the end of the book and assured myself that this evil person is properly humiliated and lives long enough to see his dark schemes thwarted? For I no longer remembered just what happened to these characters—in which, moreover, they resembled the persons who were at Mme. de Guermantes' this afternoon and whose past life, in several cases at least, was as vague in my mind as if I had read it in some half-forgotten novel. Did the Prince d'Agrigente finally marry Mlle. X? Or was it her brother who was to have married the Prince's sister? Or was I getting it all confused with something I read long ago or something I had dreamed recently?

As dreams constituted another of the facts in my life which had always struck me most forcibly and must have been the strongest factor in convincing me of the purely mental character of reality, I was not going to scorn their assistance in the writing of my book. When I was living rather selfishly wrapped up in a love affair, a dream brought my grandmother strangely close to me, making her traverse a great extent of intervening time, and likewise Albertine, whom I then began to love once more because in my sleep she had provided for me, albeit attenuated, a version of the affair with the laundress. I reflected that dreams would sometimes in this way bring nearer to me truths or impressions which would not come through my own unaided effort or even through natural contingencies, and that they would awaken in me a desire, a longing for certain non-existent things, which is the prerequisite condition for creative work, for getting out of the rut of habit and getting away from the concrete. I would not scorn this second muse, this nocturnal muse, who would occasionally assume the functions of the other.

I had sometimes seen people of noble birth show a vulgar streak when their mind was vulgar, as in the case of the Duc de Guermantes, for instance, who used to say, "You have some nerve!" as Cottard might have said. In medicine, in the Dreyfus case, in the war, I had seen people believe that

truth is a specific fact which doctors and cabinet ministers have in their possession, a "yes" or "no" that needs no further explanation, so that an X-ray plate would disclose without interpretation what is the matter with the patient, and that those in power knew whether Dreyfus was guilty or, without any need of sending Roques to make an investigation on the spot, whether Sarrail was in a position to move forward at the same time as the Russians. There is not a single hour of my life which would not have served in this way to teach me that, as I have said, it is only a superficial and defective observation which attaches all importance to the object, whereas on the contrary the mind is everything. After all, as I thought it over, the substance of my experience of life came to me from Swann and not merely through everything connected with him and Gilberte. It was he who, away back in the Combray days, gave me the desire to go to Balbec, where my parents would otherwise never have had the idea of sending me, and but for that I would never have met Albertine. Undoubtedly, her face, as I saw her for the first time, outlined against the sea, was the source of inspiration for certain things I would surely write. In one sense this was true, for if I had not gone to walk on the embankment that day and if I had not met her, all those ideas would not have developed (unless possibly through some other woman). But in another sense I was wrong, for this inspirational pleasure we like to find retrospectively in a woman's pretty face comes from our senses; it was, indeed, quite certain that Albertine, and particularly the Albertine of those days, would not have understood those pages I was going to write. But it was just for that reason, just because she was so different from me (and this is a warning that we should not live in too intellectual an atmosphere) that she had given me inspiration through suffering and even, at the very first, simply through the effort one must make to imagine something different from oneself. If she had been able to understand these pages, just because of that she would not have inspired them. But if it had not been for

Swann, I would not even have known the Guermantes, since my grandmother would not then have renewed her acquaintance with Mme. de Villeparisis and I would not have met Saint-Loup and M. de Charlus, which led to my meeting the Duchesse de Guermantes and, through her, her cousin, so that it was also through Swann that I happened at this moment to be in the house of the Prince de Guermantes, where the idea of the book I was to write had just come to me suddenly—which meant that I should be indebted to Swann, not only for its subject but also for the decision to undertake it. A rather slender stem, perhaps, to support in this way the entire expanse of my life! (In that sense "Swann's way" had led by chance to this "Guermantes way.")

But very often the unwitting author of certain phases of our life is someone very inferior to Swann, some extremely mediocre person. Might it not have been enough for any chance companion to tell me about some attractive prostitute available at Balbec (whom I probably would never have run across there) for me to go to that place? Often in some such way we later meet an unwelcome comrade and shake hands with him half-heartedly without stopping to recall that it was a random remark of his, an offhand "You ought to come to Balbec," which determined our entire life and our work. We feel no gratitude to him for this but that does not mean that we can be called ungrateful, for when he made that remark, he had no idea of the momentous consequences it was going to have for us. It was our own sensitiveness to impressions and our intelligence which exploited the circumstances, and the latter, once the first start was made, have followed one another in a continuous chain, and Swann could not have foreseen my living with Albertine any more than the masked ball at the Guermantes'. The initial impulse he gave was doubtless necessary and in that way the external character of my life and even the subject matter of my book have been determined by him. But for him my parents would never have had the idea of sending me to Balbec. However, he was not responsible for the suffering

he had himself indirectly caused. That was due to my weakness. His own weakness had made him suffer keenly through Odette. But by thus determining the life I led, he at the same time shut out all the lives I might have led instead. If he had not mentioned Balbec to me, I would never have known Albertine, the hotel dining-room, the Guermantes. But I would have gone somewhere else and met other people; my memory, as well as my books, would have been filled with very different pictures, which I cannot even imagine to myself but the unknown novelty of which tempts me and makes me regret that I did not go in their direction instead and never come to know Albertine, and the beaches at Balbec and Rivebelle, and the Guermantes.

Jealousy is a good procurer who, when there is an empty space in our picture, goes out into the street and gets us the good-looking girl we needed. She had lost her beauty but regains it because we are jealous of her. She will fill the void.

Once we are dead, we shall no longer be glad that the picture was completed in this manner; but this thought is not at all discouraging, for we feel that life is somewhat more complicated than people say, and likewise the circumstances. And there is a pressing need of demonstrating this complexity. Jealousy, which can serve such a useful purpose, does not necessarily arise only from a glance, a tale someone brings us or a look cast backward over her shoulder. One may discover jealousy, ready to sting us, hidden among the pages of a year book—*Tout Paris* for the city and *L'Annuaire des Châteaux* for the country. I had once rather absent-mindedly heard a certain good-looking girl, in whom I was no longer interested, mention that she would have to go and visit her sister in the Pas-de-Calais for a few days. Then I had quite as absent-mindedly reflected that Monsieur E. had probably been after the girl but that she was not seeing him any more, as she no longer went to the bar where she used to see him. What might her sister be? A chambermaid, perhaps? In order not to appear inquisitive, I had

not asked. And then lo and behold! on opening *L'Annuaire des Châteaux* at random, I find that Monsieur E. has a château in the Pas-de-Calais near Dunkerque. It's clear now; to please the good-looking girl, he has engaged her sister as chambermaid and the reason why the girl does not meet him in the bar any more is that he now has her come to his apartment, and he lives in Paris almost all the year but cannot do without her while he is at his château. The brushes, drunk with infuriated love, paint and paint! And yet, suppose that is not the explanation? Perhaps Monsieur E. never sees the girl any more but, out of a spirit of helpfulness, had recommended her sister to a brother of his who lives the whole year round in the Pas-de-Calais. So that maybe she happens to be going to see her sister just at a time when Monsieur E. is not at his château, for they are not concerned about one another any more. But then again, perhaps the sister is not a chambermaid at the château or anyhere else, but has relatives in the Pas-de-Calais. The unhappiness I felt at first disappears before these latter suppositions, which quiet my jealousy. But that is of no consequence for, hidden among the pages of *L'Annuaire des Châteaux,* it came at just the right moment and now the empty space in my canvas is filled and the composition is satisfactory, thanks to the presence of the girl, brought about by jealousy, although I am no longer jealous and do not love her any more.

* * *

At this point, the butler came to tell me that the first selection had ended and I could leave the library and go into the drawing-rooms. That recalled to me where I was. But I was not at all disturbed in the line of reasoning I had just started by the fact that it was a social gathering, my return to society life, that had furnished the starting-point for a new life which I had not been able to find in solitude. There was nothing remarkable about this, since an impression which might awaken in me the eternal human being was no more

necessarily linked to solitude than to society—as I had formerly believed and as had perhaps formerly been true in my case and might, perhaps, have still been true if I had developed in a uniform manner, without that long suspension of activity which seemed to be only just coming to an end. For since I received that impression of beauty only when there was superposed upon an immediate sensation, however insignificant, a similar one which, springing up spontaneously within me, came and extended the first over several periods at one time, so that my soul, in which individual sensations usually left such a void, was filled with the general essence common to these two, there was no reason why I should not receive stimuli of that sort when among my fellow beings quite as well as in the solitude of nature since they come to us from chance happenings, aided, it is true, by the special stimulation on days when we venture outside the usual course of our life, which causes even the simplest things to produce reactions that long habit usually enables our nervous system to avoid. I was going to try to discover the objective reason why it was precisely and exclusively sensations of this character which should point the way to a work of art, and for this purpose I was going to continue the chain of reasoning I had been following in the library, for I felt that the liberation of my spiritual life was now sufficiently advanced in me to be able to continue quite as well among the guests in the salon as alone in the library; it seemed to me that from this point of view, even in the midst of this large gathering, I would be able to maintain my solitude. For just as great events have no influence externally on our mental powers, so that a mediocre writer living in an epic period will remain just as mediocre, the real danger in social activity lay in the frivolous inclinations with which one went into it. But in itself it was no more able to make one mediocre than a heroic war could make a bad poet sublime. At any rate, whether it was theoretically desirable or not that a work of art be built up in this manner, until I could study this point, as I intended to do, I could not deny that, as far as I was concerned, when-

ever truly æsthetic impressions had come to me, it had always been as a result of sensations of this sort. It is true that they had been rather rare in my life, but they dominated it; I could discern in the past some of those mountain peaks which I had made the mistake of losing sight of—something I did not intend to do again. And already I could assert that, even though this trait might be peculiar to me by reason of the exclusive importance it assumed in my case, nevertheless I was reassured to discover that it bore a close resemblance to similar traits in other writers, less marked but recognisable. Was it not from sensations of the same sort as I received from the *madeleine* that the most beautiful part of the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* was derived? "Yestereve I was walking alone at close of day . . . I was roused from my meditations by the trilling of a lark perched on the topmost bough of a birch tree. On the instant this magic sound evoked before my eyes the ancestral domain; the catastrophes I had just witnessed passed from my mind and I was transported rapidly into the past, where I saw once again that countryside where I so often heard the lark sing." And is not this one of the two or three most beautiful passages in these *Mémoires:* "A sweet and subtle fragrance of heliotrope exhaled from a small clump of scarlet runner in blossom; it was not brought to us by a breeze from our native land but by a savage wind from Newfoundland, bearing no relation to the exiled plant, devoid of any sympathy of remembrance or of voluptuous delight. In this perfume, not breathed of beauty, nor purified in its bosom, nor spread along its path, in this perfume, laden with dawn, with culture and with humankind, were all the melancholies of past regrets, of exile and of youth." One of the masterpieces of French literature, the *Sylvie* of Gérard de Nerval, like the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* which tell of Combourg, contains a sensation of the same character as the savour of the *madeleine* or the "trilling of the lark." And finally, in Baudelaire, these reminiscences are still more frequent and obviously less incidental and therefore, in my opin-

ion, decisive. Here it is the poet himself who, with more variety and more indolence, purposely seeks in the odour of a woman's hair or her breast, for example, inspiring resemblances which shall evoke for him

L'azur du ciel immense et rond

and

Un port rempli de flammes et de mâts.

I was going to endeavour to recall the poems of Baudelaire which are based in similar manner on a transferred sensation, in order definitely to place myself again in line with such a noble literary heritage and thereby reassure myself that the work I was now about to undertake without any further hesitation was worth the effort I was going to devote to it, when I reached the foot of the stairs leading down from the library and suddenly found myself in the main drawing-room in the midst of a fête which was destined to strike me as very different from those I had formerly attended and to assume for me a very special character and a new meaning. What happened was that, the moment I entered the drawing-room, although I was holding firmly in mind the project I had just formed as far as I had worked it out, a *coup de théâtre* occurred which was destined to raise the gravest of objections against my undertaking, an objection which I would doubtless overcome but which, as I continued to reflect on the necessary conditions for accomplishing a work of art, was going to break in constantly upon my meditations by bringing before me a hundred times over the one consideration best calculated to cause me to hesitate. The first instant, I did not understand why I could not immediately recognise the master of the house and the guests, who seemed to have "made themselves up," usually with powdered hair, in a way that completely changed their appearance. The Prince, as he received his guests, still retained the genial manner of a fairyland king which had struck me in him the first time, but this day, having apparently submitted to the same etiquette as he had estab-

lished for his guests, he had rigged himself up with a white beard and what looked like leaden soles which made his feet drag heavily. He seemed to have taken it upon himself to represent one of the Seven Ages of Man. His mustachios were also white, as though with hoar-frost from the forest of Hop-o'-my-thumb. They made his mouth stiff and awkward and he should have removed them, once they had produced their effect. To tell the truth, I had to think hard to recognise him and I identified him only through the resemblance of certain features. As to that young Lezensac, I cannot imagine what he had put on his face but, while others had whitened, some one-half of their beards, others merely their moustaches, he had not bothered with dyes, but had managed to put wrinkles all over his face and add bristling hairs to his eyebrows. The general effect was not at all becoming; his face seemed hardened, bronzed, solemn-looking, and he appeared so old that no one would have taken him to be a young man. I was greatly surprised at the same time when I heard someone address as the Duc de Châtellerault a little old man with the silvery moustache of an ambassador, who had retained just a glance of the eye which enabled me to recognise in him the young man I had once met calling on Mme. de Villeparisis. With the first person whom I thus succeeded in identifying by trying to disregard his masquerade and supplement by an effort of memory such features as had remained unchanged, my first idea should have been, and probably was for a fraction of a second, to congratulate him on being so wonderfully made up that one was not able at first to recognise him, just as when a great actor appears in a rôle very different from his natural self, the first moment he comes on the stage the audience, although fully informed through the program, sits for an instant open-mouthed with astonishment before breaking into applause. From this point of view the most remarkable of all was my personal enemy, M. d'Argencourt, the real "hit" of the entire affair. Not only had he disguised himself with an extraordinary beard of an impossible

whiteness in place of his own, scarcely touched with gray, but also, with the aid of many slight physical changes calculated to make a person look smaller and stouter and, what is more, change his outward character, his personality, this man, whose dignified mien and starchy stiffness I still remembered, had turned himself into an old beggar who no longer inspired the least respect, and he put so much realism into his character of a driveling old man that his limbs shook and the flaccid features of his usually haughty face smirked continually with a stupidly beatific expression. Carried to this point, a disguise becomes something more than that, a transformation. And in truth, although certain small details testified that it was indeed M. d'Argencourt who was offering this picturesque but indescribable spectacle, how many successive facial stages I had to reconstruct in order to get back to the M. d'Argencourt I had known, who had changed himself so completely with merely his own physique to work with. He had evidently carried the travesty to the extreme limit possible without bursting; what had formerly been the haughtiest countenance and the most erect carriage was now merely a limp rag tossed hither and yon. Recalling an occasional smile that used sometimes to soften for an instant M. d'Argencourt's hauteur, one could just barely understand that there had been contained in the former very correct and proper gentleman the germ of the present smile of the senile old-clothes dealer. But even supposing that the intention to smile was the same as with M. d'Argencourt, the transformation of the entire face was so prodigious that the very substance of the eye which gave expression to the smile was totally altered and the smile became entirely different and seemed to belong to someone else. I burst into a laugh at the sight of this remarkable old dotard, as sottish in his friendly caricature of himself as was in a tragic sense M. de Charlus, paralysed and yet polite. M. d'Argencourt, in his incarnation of a comic moribund by a Regnard exaggerated by Labiche, was as approachable and affable as M. de Charlus in his King Lear rôle, painstakingly raising his hat

in acknowledgment of the greeting of the most insignificant person. Nevertheless, I had no intention of expressing to him my admiration of the remarkable exhibition he was furnishing. It was not my old dislike which held me back, for he had come to be so different from himself that I had the illusion of standing before another person, as kindly, well intentioned and harmless as the usual Argencourt was arrogant, hostile and dangerous. He was so much a different person, in fact, that, looking at this comic white individual, with his ineffable grimace, this little old snow man, resembling a General Dourakine in his second childhood, it seemed to me that the human being can undergo metamorphoses as complete as those of certain insects. I felt as if I were looking into the instructive show case of a natural history museum at the swift and certain evolution of the characteristics of an insect and, before this soft chrysalis, which did not move so much as it vibrated, I could not experience the feelings which M. d'Argencourt had always inspired in me. But I said nothing; I did not congratulate him on offering us a spectacle which seemed to extend still further the limits which the transformation of the human body can attain. In the wings of a theatre, it is true, or at a costume ball, one is inclined out of politeness rather to exaggerate the difficulty, almost to assert the impossibility, of recognising the disguised person. But here, on the contrary, an instinct had warned me that I should conceal this as much as possible, that there was nothing flattering in it, because the transformation was not intentional; and I came to realise something I had never dreamed of when I entered that drawing-room, namely, that every social gathering which one attends after a long absence from such affairs, provided there are present some, at least, of the persons one used to know, produces the effect of a masquerade fête of the most successful type of all, the one at which we are the most completely "puzzled" by the other guests, but one at which the strange faces they have been unintentionally developing for a long time cannot be removed with a little soap and water

after the affair is over. Puzzled by the other guests? Alas, we puzzle them quite as much, for the same difficulty I experienced in assigning the correct names to these faces seemed shared by all the people who looked at mine, paid no more attention to it than if they had never seen it, or tried to find in my present appearance some different recollection of the past.

When M. d'Argencourt put on this extraordinary "number," which for pure burlesque was unquestionably the most striking picture I would retain of him, it was like an actor who comes out on the stage for the last time before the curtain falls for good and all amid gales of laughter. If I no longer felt unfriendly toward him, it was because he had so recaptured the innocence of his earlier years that there was no longer any remembrance of the disparaging opinions he may have had of me, or of having seen M. de Charlus brusquely let go my arm, either because these feelings had entirely left him or because, to reach us, they had to pass through physical reflectors which so modified them that they changed their significance completely on the way and M. d'Argencourt appeared kindly just because there were no physical means of indicating that he was as malicious as ever or of restraining his irritating perpetual smile. It was an overstatement to compare him with an actor; relieved, as he was, of any conscious personality, he looked more like a jigging doll with a false beard of white wool as I saw him tossed about and moved up and down in this salon as though in a jointly scientific and philosophic Punch and Judy show, where he served, as in a funeral oration or a lecture at the Sorbonne, both as a reminder of the vanity of all things and as a natural-history specimen. A Punch and Judy show in which one could identify the puppets as persons one knew only by reading on several planes at a time behind them, which gave them depth and necessitated a mental effort when you had these marionette-like old men before you, because you had to look at them both with the eyes and with the memory. A Punch and Judy show of puppets bathing

in the immaterial colours of past years, puppets personifying Time, which usually is not visible and searches for bodies in order to become so and, wherever he comes across them, seizes them to shew his magic lantern on them. As immaterial as Golo in the olden days on the door-handle of my room at Combray, in the same way the new and unrecognisable d'Argencourt stood there, like the revelation of Time, which he made partially visible. In the new elements which made up his face and his character, one read a certain number of years and recognised the symbolic figure of life, not as it appears to us, that is to say, permanent, but real, an atmosphere so variable that in the evening the proud gentleman of noble birth makes a caricature of himself as a second-hand-clothes dealer.

In other persons, moreover, these changes, these veritable alienations of personality, seemed to pass beyond the domain of natural history and one was surprised on hearing a name to note that the same person could present, not like M. d'Argencourt, the characteristics of a new and different species, but the external features of a different person. As in the case of M. d'Argencourt, time had achieved unsuspected possibilities with a certain young girl, for example, but these possibilities, although entirely of the face and body, appeared to bear some relation to her character. If the facial features change and produce a different combined effect, if they usually contract more slowly, they derive a new significance from their altered appearance. Thus, for example, there was a certain woman, formerly known as a lean, shallow-minded person, whose cheeks, now so much fuller as to be unrecognisable, and her nose, with its unexpected aquiline shape, caused surprise, often the same pleasant surprise as some profound, sensitive remark or some noble, courageous act one would never have expected from her. This nose, this new nose of hers, opened up horizons of possibilities one would never have dared hope for. Kindness and tender affection, formerly out of the question, became possible with those cheeks. One could make clear to a person with that

chin things one would never have thought of attempting with the possessor of the previous one. All these new facial traits carried the implication of fresh traits of character; the lean, scrawny young girl had become a portly, indulgent dowager. One could affirm that, not in the zoological sense, as with M. d'Argencourt, but in a social and moral sense it was a different person.

From all these aspects, an affair like the one I was attending was something far more precious than a picture of the past; it offered me, as it were, all the successive pictures separating the past from the present, which I had never seen, and, better yet, the relationship of the past to the present. It resembled what used to be called "an optical view," but of the years, the view not of a monument but of a person placed in the distorting perspective of Time.

As for the woman whose lover M. d'Argencourt had been, she had not changed much, *if one took into account the length of time which had passed*, that is to say, her face was not unduly disintegrated for a person who is being completely changed during her long passage through the abyss into which she has been plunged, the direction of which cannot be described except with equally empty comparisons because we can borrow them only from the world of space and, whether we apply them to height, length or depth, the only result is to make us realise that this other inconceivable and perceptible dimension does exist. The necessity of running back over the long course of the years in order to recall the names for these faces obliged me then, by reaction, to reconstitute the years I had not been conscious of and give them their true place. From this point of view, in order not to let myself be deceived by the apparent identity of space, the entirely altered appearance of an individual—M. d'Argencourt, for example—was a striking revelation of the reality of the calendar year (which usually remains an abstraction for us) just as the sight of certain dwarf trees or of giant baobabs is a sign to us of a change of latitude. So life appears to us like the fairy play in which, from act to

act, one sees the baby become an adolescent, then a grown man and finally bend over toward the grave. And as one realises that it is through continuous changes that these individuals, observed at rather long intervals, have become so different, one realises that one has been subject to the same law as these creatures who have been so completely transformed that they no longer bear any resemblance to what we formerly saw of them, albeit—indeed, just because—they have not ceased to be themselves.

A young woman I had once known, now white-haired and shrunken into a malevolent little old woman, seemed to prove that, in the closing scene of a play, the characters must be so disguised as to be unrecognisable. And yet, her brother had remained so erect, so like his old self, that one was surprised that he should have whitened the smartly upturned moustache on his young face. The patches of snow-white beards, which had formerly been black, gave a melancholy air to the human landscape of this reception, like the first yellow leaves on the trees when one was thinking one could still count on a long summer and, before having made the most of it, one sees that autumn is already here. Then it was that I, who from my early childhood had lived along from day to day with an unchanging conception of myself and others, for the first time, from the metamorphoses which had taken place in all these people, became conscious of the time that had gone by for them—which greatly perturbed me through its revelation that the same time had gone by for me. And, though of no importance to me in itself, their old age made me desperately sad as an announcement of the approach of my own. This latter was further proclaimed to me time after time by remarks which every few minutes struck my ears like the trumpets of the Judgment Day. The first one came from the Duchesse de Guermantes, whom I had just noticed walking between a double row of staring folk who, unconscious of the miraculous artifices of toilette and æsthetics which were being used on them and impressed by the tawny head of hair and the salmon-pink body barely emerging from

its fins of black lace and wrapped round with strands of jewels, gazed upon the inherited sinuousness of its lines as they might have looked upon some ancient sacred fish, laden with precious stones, in which was incarnated the tutelary genius of the Guermantes family. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "what a joy to see you, my oldest friend!" And, while my pride as a young man at Combray, when I had never for an instant thought it possible I might be one of her friends and actually participate in the mysterious real life of the Guermantes—be one of her friends on the same footing as M. de Bréauté, M. de Forestelle, Swann and all the others now dead—might have been flattered by this, now it made me very unhappy. "Her oldest friend!" I said to myself. "She is exaggerating. One of the oldest, perhaps. But am I, then . . ." At this minute, one of the Prince's nephews came up to me and said, "As an old Parisian, you . . ." A moment later, a note was handed me. On arriving, I had met a young Létourville who knew me slightly but whose exact relationship to the Duchess I had forgotten. He had just graduated from Saint-Cyr and, with the idea that he might be an agreeable companion for me as Saint-Loup had been and might give me inside information on army matters, with all the changes that had taken place, I had promised to rejoin him in a little while and we would arrange to have dinner together, for which he had thanked me warmly. But I had stopped too long to muse in the library and the note he had left for me was to say that he was unable to wait any longer, and to give me his address. The letter from this hoped-for companion ended in this manner: "Most respectfully, Your young friend, Létourville." "Young friend!" That was the way I used in former years to write to men who were thirty years older than I, to Legrandin, for example. What! this second lieutenant, whom I had visioned as a companion like Saint-Loup, called himself my "young friend"! Then something more than military tactics had changed during these years and to M. de Létourville I was, therefore, not a comrade but an old gentleman and,

instead of being a suitable companion for him, as I had imagined myself to be, I was separated from him by the spread of invisible compasses which I had never dreamed of and which removed me so far away from the young second lieutenant that evidently, since he called himself my "young friend," I was an old man to him.

Almost immediately thereafter someone mentioned Bloch and I inquired whether they meant the young man or his father, not knowing that the latter had died during the war from the shock, it was said, of seeing France invaded. "I didn't know he had any children," replied the Duchess. "I didn't even know he was married. But it's obviously the father we're talking about because there's nothing of a young man about him," she added, with a laugh. "He is old enough to have grown-up sons." And I understood that it was my friend they were talking of. Moreover, he came in himself a moment later. I scarcely recognised him. And besides, he had now adopted, not just a pseudonym but the entire name of Jacques du Rozier, beneath which it would have required my grandfather's keen nose to detect the sweet-smelling valley of Hebron and the chains of Israel, which my friend seemed to have cast off for good and all. And indeed, a stylish English air had completely transformed his face, planing down all that could be removed. His hair, formerly curly, was brushed flat and parted in the middle, and glistened with pomade. His nose had remained large and red but now seemed rather to be swollen with a kind of chronic cold, which might account for the nasal tone with which he indolently uttered his remarks for, at the same time that he had adopted a way of arranging his hair suited to his complexion, he had hit upon a voice suited to his enunciation, giving to his former nasal way of speaking an air of disdain that went well with the inflamed nostrils. And thanks to his way of arranging his hair, the removal of his moustache, the smartness of his manner and his strong determination, that Jewish nose disappeared the way a well gotten-up hunchback can conceal his deformity. But the

instant one saw him, a most striking change in the significance of his physiognomy was produced by a formidable monocle. The mechanical touch which this gave relieved his face of all the difficult duties usually imposed on a human countenance, such as looking handsome, expressing wit, kindliness, resolution. The mere presence of this monocle made it unnecessary, in the first place, to make up one's mind whether he was good-looking or not, just as when one is shewn in a store articles imported from England and the salesman says they are the latest style, one does not dare consider whether one likes them or not. In addition he installed himself behind the glass of that monocle in as haughty, smug and distant a posture as if it had been the window of a luxurious brougham, and in order to make his face harmonise with his hair and his monocle, his features had become entirely expressionless. Over his face I saw in imagination that sickly and garrulous expression, that feeble nodding of the head which so quickly comes to a stop and in which I would have recognised the erudite weariness of amiable old men if I had not, after all, recognised my friend standing before me and if my recollections had not animated him with that erstwhile incessant youthful gaiety which he seemed now to have gotten rid of. For me, who had known him at the threshold of life, he was still my young companion, a youth whose age I calculated from the age which I unconsciously assigned to myself under the impression that I had not grown any older since that time. I heard someone say that he looked his age and I was astonished to note on his face some of the signs that are characteristic rather of old men. I then understood that it was because he really was old and that it is out of young men who last long enough that life makes its old men.

As someone, hearing that I was not well, asked if I was not afraid of catching the grippe, which was prevalent at that time, another well meaning person reassured me with the remark, "No, it is more likely to attack people who are still young; people who have reached your age don't run much

risk." And they assured me that the servants of the house had recognised me readily. They had whispered my name to one another and "in their language," one lady told how she had heard them say, "'There's Papa ——,'" mentioning my name. (Since I had no children, the appellation could allude only to my age.)

Hearing the Duchesse de Guermantes say, "What! did I know the Maréchal? Why, I knew much more prominent people, the Duchesse de Galliéra, Pauline de Périgord, Monsignor Dupanloup," I naïvely felt regret that I had not known these persons, whom she termed "a bit of the old régime." I should have stopped to think that people call "old régime" whatever they knew only toward its close. In much the same way whatever we see on the horizon assumes a mysterious size and seems to mark the boundary of a world we shall never see again; meanwhile we move forward and soon we ourselves are on the horizon from the point of view of the generations advancing behind us, but in the meantime the horizon has receded and the world that seemed to have come to its end continues to unroll before us. "I even had the good fortune to see the Duchesse de Dino when I was a young girl," Mme. de Guermantes added. "Good Lord! I'm not twenty-five any longer, you know." This last remark annoyed me. She should not have said that; it would be all right for an old woman. "As for you," she went on, "you're always the same; you have hardly changed at all." And that hurt me almost more than if she had mentioned some change in me for it proved that much time had passed, since it was surprising that there was so little change. "My friend," she said, "you are a wonder, the way you retain your youthful looks"—a dismal commentary because it has no meaning unless we have become old in fact, if not in appearance. And she dealt me the final blow when she added, "I was always sorry you never married. But after all, maybe it's just as well you didn't. You would have been old enough to have sons in the war and if they had been killed, like poor Robert de Saint-Loup (I still think of him often)

with your sensitive nature you would not have survived them." And I saw myself, as though in the first truthful mirror I had found, through the eyes of old folk who thought they had remained young (just as I believed I had myself) and who, when I pointed to myself as an example of an old man, hoping they would contradict me, shewed no look of protest in their eyes, which saw me as they did not see themselves but as I saw them. For we did not see ourselves or our own ages in their true light, but each of us saw the others as accurately as though he had been a mirror held up before them. And no doubt many folk, on discovering that they had grown old, would not have been as sad as I. But in the first place, it is the same with old age as with death—some people face both with indifference, not because they have more courage than the others but because they have more imagination. Then, too, a man who from childhood has had but one idea in mind but has been obliged by indolence and also by ill health continually to postpone the carrying out of that idea and to mark off each evening the day that had slipped away and was gone forever—so that the same malady which hastens the ageing of his body retards the maturing of his mind—is more surprised and shocked to discover that he has never ceased living in Time than a man who lives little within himself, governs himself by the calendar and does not all at once come upon the total of the years because he has been adding them up day by day. But a still graver reason explained my distress; I was discovering this destructive action of Time at the very moment when I was about to undertake to make clear and to intellectualise in a literary work some realities that had no relation whatsoever to Time.

In some of the guests, the replacing of each cell by others, gradual, it is true, but effected during my absence, had brought about such a complete change, such an entire metamorphosis, that I could have dined opposite them in a restaurant a hundred times without any more suspecting that I had once known them than I could have guessed the

royal rank of a sovereign travelling incognito or the secret vice of some total stranger. And this comparison is inadequate even in the cases where I heard the guests' names, for you can conceive that a stranger seated opposite you may be a criminal or a king, whereas I had known these people—or, rather, I had known people of the same name but so different that I could not believe they were the same. However, just as I would have done in the case of the stranger if I had started out with the assumption of royalty (or vice) which very quickly detects in his features something distinguished (or suspicious)—whereas, with one's eyes bandaged, it would have been so easy to commit the blunder of being disrespectful (or friendly)—I made a determined effort to apply to the face of an entirely unknown woman the idea that she was Mme. Sazerat, and ultimately I reconstituted the old familiar significance of her face, which would have remained utterly strange to me, wholly that of another woman who had lost all the human attributes familiar to me as fully as would a man who turned into a monkey, if her name and the assertion of her identity had not put me on the track of the solution, notwithstanding the difficult nature of the problem. Sometimes, however, the old image came back so clearly that I was able to try putting them side by side; and like a witness brought to identify an accused person, the difference was so great that I was forced to say, "No, I don't recognise him."

A young woman said to me, "Shall we two go and dine together in some restaurant?" As I replied, "Very well, unless you think it might compromise you to be seen dining alone with a young man," I heard everyone around me laugh and I hastened to add, "or, I should say, with an old one." I realised that the remark that had made them laugh was one that my mother, to whom I was always a child, might have made in speaking of me. From which I noticed that, when I wished to form an opinion of myself, I took the same point of view as she. Though in the long run I noted, as she used to do, certain changes that had occurred since my early

childhood, they were changes which had taken place a long time before. I had stopped at the one which had once caused someone to say, almost before it was a fact, "He is almost a young man now." I still thought this but now it was very much out of date. I was not aware how much I had changed. But after all, how did they come to notice it, those people who had burst out laughing? I did not have a single grey hair; my moustache was entirely black. I should have liked to be able to ask them what revealed the evidence of the terrible thing. And now I understood what old age was—old age which, of all the realities, is perhaps the one concerning which we retain for the longest time a purely abstract conception, looking at the calendars, dating our letters, watching our friends get married and our friends' children, without understanding, whether through fear or indolence, what it all means, until the day we catch sight of a strange silhouette, such as M. d'Argencourt's, which opens our eyes to the fact that we are now living in a different world; or until the day when the grandson of one of our friends, a young man whom we would instinctively treat as a comrade, smiled as if we were poking fun at him, because we seemed like a grandfather to him; I grasped the meaning of death and love, of intellectual pleasures, the value of sorrow or of a vocation. For even if names had lost their meaning for me, words disclosed to me their full significance. The beauty of an image is to be found behind the object—that of an idea, in front of it. So that the beauty of the former ceases to enrapture us when we have arrived at the object itself, but we do not understand the beauty of the latter until we have gone beyond the object.

And so the cruel discovery I had just made with regard to the passage of Time could not fail to combine with all these other ideas and be of value to me in connection with the core and substance of my book. Since I had decided that it could not be composed exclusively of genuinely complete impressions, namely, those that have no relation to Time, among the truths with which I planned to surround them,

like precious stones in a setting, those which relate to Time, that Time in which men, groups and nations are engulfed and change, would occupy a large place. I would not be wholly preoccupied with considering those changes which occur in the outward aspect of human beings, of which I was getting fresh examples every minute—for even while meditating on my literary work, now so definitively launched that it could not be stopped by passing distractions, I continued to greet the people I knew and chat with them for a while. The advancing years, let me add, did not shew on all of them in the same manner. I noticed someone who was inquiring as to my name; I was told it was M. de Cambremer. And then, to shew that he had recognised me, he asked, "Do you still have those asthmatic attacks?" On my replying in the affirmative, he remarked, "You see, that does not prevent a person from living to a ripe old age," as if I were fully a hundred years old. As I talked with him, I could not take my eyes off two or three of his features which I was able in thought to fit into that synthesis of my past recollections—very different in every other respect—which I called his personal appearance. But once he turned his head sideways and then I saw that what had so completely changed his looks was the development of huge red pouches on his cheeks, which hindered him from opening freely his mouth or his eyes, with the result that I stood there stupefied, not daring to look at those carbuncles, so to speak, which it seemed to me more proper he should mention first. But he laughed and made no reference to it, like a plucky invalid, and so I was afraid I might seem callous if I did not ask about it, or tactless if I did. "But they come less frequently as you get older, don't they?" he asked, still talking about my asthmatic attacks. I replied in the negative. "Oh yes, they do; my sister has them noticeably less often than she used to," he insisted in a contradictory tone, as if it had to be the same for me as for his sister and as if old age were one of those remedies which he could not conceive should fail to benefit me when they had helped Mme. de

Gaucourt. When Mme. de Cambremer-Legrandin joined us, I was more and more afraid of seeming unsympathetic if I did not express regret at what I noticed on her husband's face and yet I did not dare to be the first to mention it. "You're glad to see him?" she asked me. "Is he in good health?" I replied, with a doubtful air. "You can see for yourself," she answered. She was not even aware of this affliction, which it was so painful for me to look at and which was nothing else than one of the masks that Time had applied to the Marquis's face, but little by little, making it heavier so gradually that the Marquise had not noticed the transformation. When M. de Cambremer had finished asking me about my asthmatic attacks, I had an opportunity to inquire of someone in a low voice whether the Marquis's mother was still alive. She was. In grasping the idea of the passage of time, the first step is the hardest. One finds it difficult at first to realise that so much time has gone by and then that even more time has not passed. You had never imagined that the thirteenth century was so far back and then you find it hard to believe that there are some churches of that period still in existence, although they are very numerous in France. There had taken place in me in a few minutes the same process as goes on more slowly in people who first have trouble believing that someone they knew when young is now sixty years old; then, fifteen years later, they cannot believe that he is still living and is only seventy-five years old. I asked M. de Cambremer how his mother was. "As wonderful as ever," he replied, using an adjective which in certain families, in contrast to tribes where the aged relatives are treated mercilessly, is applied to the old folk, whose retention of some of their more purely physical faculties, such as hearing well, walking to church, bearing with stolidity the loss of friends and relatives, seems to their children to have about it some remarkable moral beauty.

While some of the women admitted their age by resorting to cosmetics, it was, on the other hand, the absence of "make-up" which disclosed the approach of old age in the

case of some men on whose faces I had never specially noticed it, but who nevertheless now appeared greatly changed since they had given up trying to look well and had stopped using it. Among these was Legrandin. Doing away with the pink of his lips and cheeks, which I had never suspected was artificial, gave to his face the greyish tinge, and to his sharper, now dismal features the carved and chiseled precision, of an Egyptian god. A god? Say rather, a ghost. He had lost all heart, not only to use paint on his face but even to smile, to keep a sparkle in his eye or make clever remarks. It was startling to see him so pale, so downhearted, uttering only a few words, as meaningless as those spoken by spirits called back from beyond the grave. One wondered what it was that prevented him from being vivacious, talkative, charming, just as one does on seeing the insignificant "spirit" of a man who was brilliant in his lifetime, even though the medium asks it questions which would lend themselves to fascinating explanations. And one concluded that old age was the influence which had substituted for the high-complexioned, lively Legrandin a pale and sorry phantom of himself. In the case of some men, their hair had not even started to turn white. That was why I recognised the old valet of the Prince de Guermantes when he came to say a word to his master. The bristling hair that stood out on his cheeks, as well as on the top of his head, was still of a reddish hue, verging on pink, and yet he could not be suspected of dyeing his hair, like the Duchesse de Guermantes. But, for all that, he seemed old. One merely realised that there are some types of men who are like some species of the vegetable kingdom, mosses, lichens and many others, which do not change with the approach of winter.

In other guests, whose faces were still unmarred, age shewed itself in other ways; they seemed a little awkward when they had to take a few steps; at first one thought they had some trouble with their legs; but after a while one came to realise that old age had given them leaden feet. Some had improved with age, like the Prince d'Agrigente. The

tall, slender man, with lustreless eyes, and hair that seemed destined to remain forever reddish, had been replaced, through a metamorphosis like that of insects, by an old man with white hair in place of the red, which had been on exhibition too long, like a tablecloth that has been used too much. His chest had acquired a strangely robust, almost warrior-like corpulence and must have occasioned a veritable bursting of the slender chrysalis I had formerly known; a conscious gravity, tempered with a new kindliness toward everyone, shone in his eyes. And since in spite of everything a certain resemblance persisted between the vigorous prince of the present and the portrait of his former self in my memory, I marvelled at the power of complete reconstruction possessed by Time which, while respecting the unity of the individual and the laws of life, is able to change the setting in this way and introduce daring contrasts between two successive aspects of one and the same person, for many of these people I was able to identify at once, although they were like rather poor portraits of themselves, brought together in an exhibition where an inaccurate and mean-spirited artist had hardened the features of one, taken away the fresh complexion of another and her slender waist and flashing eyes. Comparing these images with those I had in my "mind's eye," I preferred the earlier ones. Just as often we dislike and refuse one photograph among several that a friend has asked us to choose from. To each person, as I looked at the picture of himself that he offered me, I would have liked to say, "No, not this one; you're not as good-looking; it isn't you." I would not have dared to add, "Instead of your handsome straight nose, they have given you your father's hooked nose, which I never saw on you before." The fact is, it was a new, ancestral nose. In short, the artist Time had turned out all these models in such a way that they were recognisable but not good likenesses, not because he had flattered them, but because he had made them look older. That artist, moreover, works very slowly. Thus, for instance, that replica of Odette's face, a suggestion

of which I had seen barely sketched in Gilberte's face the day I first saw Bergotte, had finally been developed by Time to the point of the most perfect likeness (as will be shewn a little later) much as a painter keeps a piece of work on hand for many years, adding to it from time to time. In several guests I finally recognised, not merely the individual but the person I had formerly known—Ski, for example, as little altered as a flower or a fruit that has dried, one of those connoisseurs, "celibates of art," who go through life useless and unsatisfied. Ski had thus remained like an embryonic attempt, confirming my theories on art. Others followed him who were not in any way connoisseurs of art, society people who took an interest in nothing, and they, too, had not been ripened by age but their still rosy-cheeked faces retained the cheerful expression of their early youth, even though bordered with the first fringe of wrinkles and crowned with a wreath of white hair. They were not old folk but young people of eighteen, very much faded. It would have taken very little to remove these stigmata of life, and death would be able to restore their youthful appearance with no more effort than is required to remove from a portrait the thin layer of dirt which alone dims its oldtime brilliance. And I thought also of the delusion we are under when we hear some well known old man mentioned and assume in advance that he is kind and just and tender-hearted; for I realised that, forty years before, he had been a terrible young man, with a vanity, duplicity, arrogance and trickery which there is no reason to suppose he has lost.

And yet, in marked contrast with these latter, I had the pleasant surprise of talking with men and women who used to be unbearable but who had lost almost all their bad qualities, life having either reduced their self-assurance by thwarting their aims or lessened their bitterness by fulfilling their desires. A wealthy marriage, which made it no longer necessary to strive or to keep up a display, even the wife's influence, a slowly acquired appreciation of values different from those in which a frivolous youth believes exclusively, had

made it possible for them to relax their characters and shew their good qualities. As they grew older, they seemed to take on a different personality, like those trees which, by changing their colour in the autumn, seem to change their very nature. In their case the personality of their later years shewed itself clearly but as something spiritual which they had not possessed before. In others it was more physical and so new that the person—Mme. de Souvré, for example—seemed to me at the same time unknown and yet known—unknown because it was impossible for me to suspect that it was she and, in spite of myself, as I returned her greeting, I could not conceal the mental effort which made me hesitate as to which of three or four persons (of whom Mme. de Souvré was not one) I was shaking hands with—and with a friendliness, by the way, which must have surprised her, for in my doubt, afraid of being too cool if it turned out to be some close friend, I made up for the uncertainty in my glance by the warmth of my handshake and my smile. But on the other hand, her new appearance was not unfamiliar to me. It was the same as I had often seen in the course of my life on stout, elderly women but without suspecting then that it was possible they had looked like Mme. de Souvré many years earlier. Her appearance now was so different from what I had known in the past that one might have taken her for a character in a fairy play, condemned to appear first as a young girl, then as a sturdy matron and soon to come on again, no doubt, as a bent and palsied old woman. Like some tired swimmer who sees the shore afar off, she seemed barely able to push back the waves of time that were submerging her. By close study of her doubtful face, uncertain as an untrustworthy memory that can no longer retain the outlines of former years, I succeeded, however, in bringing to light something of the original by indulging in a little game of eliminating the squares and hexagons which age had added to her cheeks. I should state, however, that it was not always geometrical figures that age added to the women's faces. In the Duchesse de

Guermantes' cheeks, albeit so little altered, and yet now as composite as nougat, I was able to discern a trace of verdigris, a bit of pulverised pink shell, a swelling hard to describe, smaller than a mistletoe berry and less transparent than a glass bead.

Some men limped, but one realised that it was not the result of a carriage accident, but of a stroke and because they already had one foot in the grave, as the saying is. Some women, such as Mme. de Franquetot, half paralysed, seemed unable quite to disengage their dress, caught on the stonework of their tomb, and they could not straighten up, bent over as they were, with their heads inclined, in a stooping posture that suggested their present situation, tottering between life and death until they should make the final plunge. Nothing could withstand the movement of this parabolic curve which was carrying them off and, if they tried to stand up, immediately they trembled and their hands could not hold anything.

Other faces under the cowl of their white hair already had the rigidity and the sealed eyelids of those who are about to die, and their lips, moved by a perpetual quivering, seemed to be mumbling the prayer of those *in extremis*.

White hair in place of black or blond was sufficient to alter completely a face whose lines had remained the same. Theatrical costumers know that a powdered wig is enough to disguise anyone adequately and make him unrecognisable. The young Marquis de Beausergent, whom I had seen in Mme. de Cambremer's box, when he was only a second lieutenant, the day Mme. de Guermantes was in her cousin's box, still had the same features, as perfectly regular as ever, even more so, as the physiological rigidity of arteriosclerosis still further accentuated the impassive fixity of his physiognomy of a dandy and gave his features the excessive sharpness—so immobile that it amounted almost to a grimace—which they would have had in a study by Mantegna or Michelangelo. His complexion, formerly of a racy red, was now of a solemn pallour; some grey hairs, a slight tendency

to stoutness, the stately carriage of a doge, a weariness that amounted to a constant desire to sleep, all of this combined in him to give an unwonted air of fatal majesty. The rectangle of his blond beard was now replaced by an equal rectangle of white so perfectly that, noticing that this second lieutenant I had known now had five bars, my first impulse was to congratulate him, not on having been promoted to be a colonel but on looking so well when dressed up as a colonel, for which disguise he seemed to have borrowed from his father the latter's uniform and sad and solemn air of a superior officer. Another man's blond beard had likewise given way to a white one, but, his face having remained young, alert and smiling, the white beard only made him appear more ruddy and aggressive, adding to the sparkle of his eyes and giving to this society man who had retained his youth the inspired air of a prophet. The transformation that white hair and other details had effected, especially in the women, would have held my attention less forcibly if they had constituted simply a change in colour, which can charm the eye, and not also a change in personality, which is disturbing to the mind. And in truth, to "recognise" someone and, more especially, to work out his identity after not having been able to recognise him, means conceiving two contradictory things under the same denomination; it means admitting that what used to be here, the person we remember, no longer exists, while the one that is here we did not know; it means having to penetrate a mystery almost as disturbing as death, of which it is, as it were, the preface and the forerunner. For I knew what these changes meant, what they were the prelude to. Therefore this whiteness of the hair was very impressive in the women, combined with so many other changes. A name was mentioned to me and I was stupefied to think that it designated both the blond woman at the dance whom I had once known and the thickset lady in white hair who was walking heavily past me. Together with a certain high colour, that name was, perhaps, the only thing in common between the two women, the one

in my memory and the one at the Guermantes reception, more different from one another than the *ingénue* and the dowager in a play. For life to have succeeded in giving to the former dancer this enormous body, and to have been able, as with a metronome, to slow down her ungainly movements, and finally to have substituted this pot-bellied old drum major for the slender blond, with perhaps not a single particle unchanged except the cheeks—fuller, it is true, but even in her youth they were already blotched with red—more demolition and reconstruction had been necessary than for putting a dome in the place of a spire; and when one stopped to reflect that this operation had been performed, not on inert matter but on flesh, which changes only imperceptibly, the startling contrast between the present spectacle and the person I remembered pushed the latter back into a past more than remote, almost incredible. It was difficult to connect the two appearances, to conceive the two persons under one and the same denomination, for in the same way as it is hard to imagine that a dead person was once alive or that one who was alive yesterday is dead today, it presents a difficulty almost as great and of much the same sort (for the dissolution of youthfulness, the destruction of an individual full of strength and agility is already a preliminary annihilation) to imagine that the woman who once was young is now old, when the appearance of the old woman, put beside that of the young one, seems to make this so impossible that first it is the old one, then the young one, then the old one again who seems to be only a dream, and one would never believe that the latter could once have been the former, or that the original substance of her did not take refuge somewhere else but, under the skilful manipulation of Time, has become what we now see before us, that it is the same substance and has never left the same body—if we did not have the proof of this in the identity of the names and the supporting testimony of friends, with nothing to add an appearance of probability except the red blotches, formerly hidden among her golden strands but now displayed

widely under her snow-white hair. It was disquieting to think of the long periods of time that must have passed away before the completion of such a revolution in the geology of a face and to note the erosions that had occurred along the nose and the immense alluvial deposits beside the cheeks, surrounding the entire face with their opaque and refractory mass. I had, it is true, always regarded our individual self at any given moment as a sort of polypary, in which the eye, an independent but related organism, winks if a bit of dust comes along, without being directed by the intelligence; or, rather, in which the intestine, like a hidden parasite, gets infected without the intelligence knowing it; but also (and similarly as to the soul throughout our lifetime) as a series of selves, juxtaposed but distinct, which would successively die or even alternate for one another, like those which used to take one another's place within me in Combray as night came on.

But I had also noticed that these moral cells which make up a human being are more lasting than he himself. I had seen the vices and the courage of the Guermantes reappear in Saint-Loup, together with the strange, occasional defects of his own character, like the Semitism in Swann. I could see it also in Bloch. Since he had lost his father, the idea that the latter was a man head and shoulders above all the rest, added to the strong family feeling often to be found in Jewish households, had caused his love for his parent to assume the form of a religious cult. He had been unable to bear the idea that his father was gone, and had had to shut himself up in a sanitarium for nearly a year. He had acknowledged my expression of sympathy in a tone shewing deep emotion and at the same time almost condescending, so privileged did he consider me to have been admitted to the presence of that superior person, whose two-horse carriage he would have been glad to present to some historical museum. And now, at his family table (for, contrary to what the Duchesse de Guermantes believed, he was married) the same anger that his father had felt against M. Nissim

Bernard he felt against his own father-in-law. He indulged in similar outbursts against him. Just as, in listening to Cottard, Brichot and many others, I had come to realise that, through common culture and fashionable fads, a simple undulation sends the same mannerisms of speech and thought over the surface of the globe, in the same way over the whole expanse of time great tidal waves bring up from the depths of the ages the same hatreds, the same sorrows, the same types of bravery, the same strange fancies running through superposed generations, each section made at various levels in the same series giving a repetition (like shadows cast on a row of screens) of a phenomenon as identically reproduced, although often not as trivial, as the family trait which set M. Bloch junior at odds with his father-in-law, M. Bloch senior with M. Nissim Bernard, and others before them whom I had never known.

There were men whom I knew to be related to other men without my ever having found that they had a single trait in common; admiring the white-haired old hermit that Legrandin had become, I suddenly noticed—I might say, discovered with the satisfaction of a zoologist—in the flatness of his cheeks the same formation as in those of his young nephew, Léonor de Cambremer who, however, did not seem to resemble him at all; to this first peculiarity which they possessed in common I added another which I had not previously observed in Léonor de Cambremer, then others which were not to be found in my customary recollection of his youthful appearance, so that I soon had of him as it were a caricature, more truthful and penetrating than if it had been a perfect likeness; his uncle now appeared to me as young Cambremer who had amused himself by assuming the appearance of the old man he would, in fact, be some day. Thus it was not merely the transformations which had occurred in the young people of yesterday, but also those to come in the young people of to-day, which were conveying the sensation of Time to me with such telling effect.

The women tried to retain something of the most distinc-

tive element of their charm, but often the new material in their faces no longer lent itself to this. Most of them, having lost the features which had borne the imprint of beauty, at least—if not of youth—had then tried to find a way to construct another beauty with their present set of features. Displacing, if not the center of gravity, at any rate the center of perspective of their face and arranging the features around that so as to conform to a new type, they began at the age of fifty a new sort of beauty, just as some people take up a new profession late in life, or very much as a piece of land that is no longer any good for grape-growing is made to produce beets. Around these new features, they made a new youthfulness blossom forth. The only women who could not take advantage of these transformations were those who were either too handsome or too homely. The former, as though pieces of marble sculpture the finished lines of which could not now be changed in any way, were crumbling away, bit by bit, like statues. The others, those who had some facial deformity, had certain advantages even over the handsome women. In the first place they were the only ones who were recognised immediately. One knew that there were not two mouths alike in Paris, and theirs enabled me to recognise them at this reception where I had been unable to recognise anyone at all. In the second place, those women did not even appear to have aged. Old age is a human thing. They were monsters and did not seem to have changed any more than whales. And there were other men and women who likewise did not appear to have grown any older; their figures were as slender and their faces as young as ever. But if, in order to talk with them, I approached very close to the face, with its smooth skin and fine outlines, it then looked quite different, as happens with the outer surface of a vegetable or a drop of water or blood when placed under the microscope. Then I discerned a multitude of fatty splotches under the skin that I had thought so smooth, but which now sickened me. Nor did the lines of the face withstand this enlargement any better. When viewed at close

range, the line of the nose was interrupted and weakened and the same oily spots were here as on the rest of the face, while the eyes were seen to be sunken behind pouches that destroyed the likeness which I thought I had discovered between this face and the one of former days. Consequently, as far as those guests were concerned, they were young if seen from a distance but their age increased with the magnifying of the face and the possibility of examining its various surfaces. In other words, with them old age was dependent on the person looking at them; he had to assume the right position if he wished to see their faces remain young and had to cast on them only those distant glances which make the object look smaller, without using the lenses an optician selects for a far-sighted person; with them old age, as readily detected as infusoria in a drop of water, drew nearer, not with the progress of the years but in proportion as the vision of the observer moved along the scale of enlargement.

In general, the degree of whiteness of the hair was like an indication of the extent of time the person had lived, like those mountain summits which, although appearing to the eye to be on a line with other peaks, nevertheless reveal the scale of their altitude by the brilliancy of their snowy whiteness. But that was not always dependable, especially with the women. Thus, the Princesse de Guermantes' locks which, when they were a silky, glossy grey, had looked like a wreath of silver above her prominent forehead, as they turned white, took on the dull tone of wool or tow and because of that seemed grey, like dirty snow that has lost its brilliance. And in many cases, flaxen-haired dancers had, along with a peruke of white hair, acquired something more than the friendship of duchesses they had not previously known. But, having done nothing but dance in their youth, art had touched them like divine grace and, just as in the seventeenth century illustrious ladies entered monastic orders, they dwelt in apartments filled with cubist pictures, living only for some cubist painter who produced solely for them.

As for the old men whose features had changed, they

nevertheless endeavoured to maintain, fixed and permanent, one of those fleeting expressions of countenance which one assumes for a second's pose, either to take full advantage of some outward excellence or to offset some defect; they looked as if they had become for all time immutable snapshots of themselves.

All these persons had taken so much *time* to put on their disguises that those who lived with them seldom were aware of the change. An extension of time was even granted them frequently during which they were permitted to remain themselves until rather late in life. But then the deferred disguising went forward more rapidly; in any case, it was inevitable. I had never detected any resemblance between Mme. X and her mother, whom I had known only as an elderly woman, shrunken like a little old Turk, whereas the daughter was erect and charming when I knew her and she remained so for a very long time—too long, in fact, for, like someone who must not forget to put on again her Turkish costume before night comes, she had lost track of time and so in a hurry, almost over night, she had become shrunken and had faithfully reproduced her mother's resemblance to a little old Turkish woman.

I met there again one of my old friends whom I had been in the habit of seeing almost every day for ten years. Someone wished to introduce us again, so I went over to him and he said to me in a voice that I recognised perfectly, "This is a great pleasure to me after all these years." But what a surprise I had! The voice seemed to have been uttered by an improved phonograph for, though it was my friend's voice, it came from a stout, grey-haired fellow whom I did not know, and from then on it seemed to me that in some artificial way, by some mechanical trick, they must have installed my friend's voice inside this commonplace, fat old man. And yet I knew it was he; the person who had introduced us to one another after such a long lapse of time had nothing of the practical joker about him. He himself told me I had not changed, from which I understood that he

thought he had not, either. Then I looked at him more closely. And in truth, except that he had grown so much stouter, he had retained much of his former self. Still I could not grasp the idea that it could be he. Then I tried to remember. When he was young, he had had blue eyes, always merry, always in motion, evidently in search of something I had not thought of but which must have been very impersonal, the truth, no doubt, pursued with perpetual uncertainty—and with all that, a sort of roguishness and a roving respect for all the friends of his family. But now, having become an influential politician, capable and dictatorial, those blue eyes of his—which, by the way, had not found what they were seeking—had become fixed, and this gave them a sharp expression, as though looking out from under a frowning eyebrow. And so his expression of gaiety and innocent abandon had changed to one of trickery and deceit. No, it certainly seemed to me that it was someone else, when suddenly, at something I said, I heard his laugh, his hearty laugh of former days, which used to go so well with the gay, perpetual restlessness of his eyes. Fanatical music lovers maintain that Z's music is entirely different when orchestrated by X. These are subtle shadings which ordinary folk cannot grasp, but the half-smothered hearty laugh of a child, under a piercing glance like a well sharpened pencil—even if a bit sidewise—this is more than a difference in orchestration. When the laugh stopped, I tried to recognise my friend but, like Ulysses in the *Odyssey* throwing himself on his mother's dead body or like a medium trying in vain to get from an apparition some reply that will identify it, or like the visitor at an electrical exhibition who cannot believe that the voice which comes back to him so perfectly from the phonograph has not, just the same, been spontaneously uttered by someone else, I was no longer able to recognise my friend.

I must, however, make this qualification, that it is possible in the case of some people for the time beats to be accelerated or retarded. I had happened to meet in the street, four

or five years before, the Vicomtesse de St.-Fiacre, daughter-in-law of the Guermantes' friend. Her statuesque features seemed to assure her eternal youth. And, besides, she was still young. But now, despite her smiles and her greeting, I could not recognise her in a lady whose features were so chipped away that the lines of her face could no longer be reconstructed. What had happened was that she had been taking cocaine and other drugs for three years past. Her eyes, circled with deep black rings, wore almost a haunted look. Her mouth had a peculiar sneer. She had gotten up specially for that reception, I was told, but spent months without leaving her bed or her *chaise longue*. Time has in this way express trains and special trains to carry people to a premature old age. But on the other track return trains run almost as swiftly. I mistook M. de Courgivaux for his son, for he looked younger than ever (he must have been past fifty, but seemed under thirty). He had found an intelligent doctor and had given up alcohol and salt; he had become thirty years old again and that day looked even younger because he had had his hair cut that very morning.

It was a curious thing how the phenomenon of old age, in the various forms it assumed, appeared to take into account certain social habits. Men who, although of aristocratic birth, had always gone around dressed in the plainest alpaca suits and old straw hats that even a shopkeeper would not have been willing to wear had aged in just the same way as the gardeners and farmers among whom they had lived. Brown spots had developed on their cheeks and their faces had turned yellow and dark, like the pages of an old book.

And I thought also of all those who were not present because they were unable to come, but whose secretaries tried to create the illusion of their survival by means of the telegrams that were being delivered to the Princess every now and then—sick folk who have been dying for years, who do not get up any more or move a muscle and who, even surrounded by the shallow solicitude of visitors drawn

there by tourist curiosity or the trusting faith of pilgrims, lie with closed eyes, rosary in hand, turning back partly the already shroud-like sheet and looking like a reclining person whom some disease has chiseled down to a skeleton of rigid flesh, white as marble, stretched out on his tomb.

Some women, it is true, were still easily recognisable; their countenances had remained almost unchanged and they had merely, as though in harmonious agreement with the season, adopted grey hair as their personal adornment for the autumn. But in the case of other women, and some men as well, the transformation was so complete and their identity so impossible to establish—for example the identity of a man whom I remembered as a dark-haired libertine and the old monk now before me—that it was the art of certain marvellous mimes (of whom Fregoli remains the perfect type) rather than the art of the actor, which these fabulous transformations called to mind. A desire to weep seized the old woman who realised that the indefinable, melancholy smile which used to be her special charm was no longer able to break through to the surface of the plaster mask which old age had fastened on her face. Then, suddenly discouraged from further attempts to please and considering it cleverer to accept the inevitable, she used it like a comic stage mask to make people laugh. But most of the women, knowing no respite in their effort to struggle against old age, held up their faces to their departing beauty, like mirrors in which they were passionately eager to capture the last rays of a setting sun. To accomplish this, some endeavoured to smooth out their faces, to extend the white surface, sacrificing the piquant effect of a slowly vanishing dimple or the mischievousness of an already condemned and half-disarmed smile; while others, seeing that their beauty had left them forever, were obliged to have recourse to expression, as one makes up for the loss of one's voice by perfecting one's enunciation, and clung desperately to a pout, a crow's-foot, a dreamy look, or sometimes a smile which, through failure

of rebellious muscles to coördinate, made them look as if they were crying.

One stout lady said good afternoon to me and during that short instant the most diverse thoughts came crowding into my mind. For a moment I hesitated to return her greeting, fearing that perhaps she did not recognise people any better than I and had taken me for someone else; but then her assurance made me, on the contrary, overdo the affability of my smile, for fear that she might be someone with whom I had been closely associated, and meanwhile my eyes continued to seek in her features the name I could not recall. Just as a candidate for the baccalaureate, uncertain what he should reply, fixes his gaze on the examiner's face and vainly hopes to find there the answer which he would do much better to seek in his own memory, in the same way, even as I smiled at her, I fastened my eyes on the stout lady's face. It seemed to me she was Mme. de Forcheville and so my smile took on a tinge of respect, while my indecision began to lessen. A second later I heard the stout lady say, "You took me for mamma; it is true I am beginning to look very much like her." And I recognised Gilberte.

Another point is that, even in the case of the men who had undergone only a slight change—merely their moustache having turned white, for example—one understood that this change was not exclusively a physical one. It was as though one were looking at them through a coloured mist or, better, a painted piece of glass, which changed the appearance of their face, principally by making it vague, and shewed that what it allowed us to see as if life-size was in reality very far away, separated, it is true, by something very different from space, looking at us from a great distance, as though from the farther shore of a river and, we felt, having as much difficulty in recognising us as we were having in recognising them. Mme. de Forcheville—who looked to me as if they had filled her veins with some liquid, some kind of paraffin which keeps the skin firm and preserves it unchanged—was, perhaps, the only one who seemed like an old-time courtesan,

preserved in lifelike fashion for all time. "You take me for my mother," Gilberte had said. That was true. It would have been flattering for the daughter, by the way. And it was not only in her case that family traits had appeared which up till then had remained hidden in the features as completely as those parts folded inside a seed which are some day going to burst forth in a manner one would never guess. Thus, with one woman or another, an enormous maternal arching had come along about the age of fifty and transformed a nose that had previously been straight and fine. In the case of another, a banker's daughter, her complexion, as fresh as a dairymaid's, was taking on a russet, copperish hue, as though a reflexion of the gold her father had handled so much. Others had even come to look like their section of the city and bore, as it were, the reflexion of the Rue de l'Arcade, the Avenue du Bois, the Rue de l'Elysée. But most often they reproduced the features of their parents.

One starts out with the idea that people have remained the same and one finds them old. But once one starts out with the idea that they are old, one finds them much as they used to be, not looking so badly after all. As for Odette, it was more than that; once one knew her age and prepared oneself to see an old woman, her appearance seemed to challenge the laws of chronology more miraculously than the indestructibility of radium does those of nature. The reason I did not recognise her at once was not that she had changed so much but that she had changed so little. Having been discovering for the last hour how much that is new time adds to people's appearance and how much one must subtract in order to make them once more as I had known them, I performed this calculation quickly and added to the former Odette the number of years that had passed over her head; the result I obtained was a person who, it seemed to me, could not possibly be the one I had before my eyes, simply because the latter was identical with the one I used to know.

How much of this effect was due to cosmetics and dyeing

of the hair? Under her golden hair, arranged low on her head—looking somewhat like the disordered wig of a large mechanical doll surmounting an equally doll-like face, with its fixed expression of surprise—and her low-crowned straw hat, she looked as if she were representing the Exposition of 1878 (of which she would undoubtedly at that time have been the most incredible wonder, especially if she had then been her present age) which had come to say its little piece in an annual *revue,* but impersonated by a woman still in her youth.

A man who had been a minister before the Boulanger period and who was again in the cabinet also passed by, giving the ladies a quavering, far-away smile that seemed enmeshed in the countless trammels of the past; he was like a little phantom moved about by an invisible hand, diminished in size and changed in substance and looking like a miniature reproduction of himself in pumice stone. This former Prime Minister, now so well received in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, had years before been under criminal prosecution and execrated by high and low. But, thanks to the change in the composition of both these groups and also in the passions and even the recollections of such of the former individuals as still remained, there was no one left who knew of this, and he was held in high esteem. There is, therefore, no humiliation, however great, to which one should not resign himself readily, knowing that our buried mistakes will at the end of a few years be nothing but invisible dust, over which the smiling peace of nature will strew its flowers. When the pendulum of time swings back, the temporarily discredited individual will find himself taken up by two fresh social groups which will have only deferential respect and admiration for him and which he will be able to "lord it over" at his ease. But it is time alone that can accomplish this work; and at the time of his troubles nothing can console the accused individual for the fact that the young dairymaid opposite heard him called "grafter" by the crowd, as they shook their fists at him while he was getting into the

prison van, she not seeing things in their true position in the scheme of Time and not knowing that the men whom the morning newspaper fawns upon to-day were in high disfavour yesterday and that the man who is skirting prison at this moment and who, perhaps thinking of that young dairymaid, will not speak in a sufficiently humble tone to win public sympathy, will one day be acclaimed by the press and sought after by duchesses. Time removes family disputes in like manner. And at the Princesse de Guermantes' a husband and wife were to be seen whose respective uncles, now dead, had not been satisfied to exchange blows, but one of them, in order to humiliate the other, had sent his janitor and his butler as seconds for a duel, considering that men of social standing would have been too good for him. But these stories lay buried in the newspapers of thirty years ago and no one knew anything about them now. Thus the brightly lighted drawing-room of the Princesse de Guermantes was flower-bedecked and forgetful, like a peaceful cemetery. Within its walls, Time had not only worked the destruction of venerable creatures but had made possible, and had actually built up, new associations.

To return to that politician—despite the transformation of his physical substance, quite as profound as the change in the moral sentiments which he now evoked in the public mind—in a word, despite all the years that had passed since he had been Prime Minister, he had become minister again. This Prime Minister of forty years ago was a member of the new cabinet, the head of which had given him a portfolio much as a director of a theatre entrusts a rôle to a woman with whom he used to act but who retired long ago, because he considers her more capable of playing the part with *finesse* than the young actresses (also he knows her strained financial situation) and who at nearly eighty demonstrates before the public the integrity of her almost unimpaired talent, together with an undiminished vitality which, later, people are surprised to have remarked only a few days before her death.

Mme. de Forcheville's appearance was so miraculous that one could not even say that she had grown younger, but rather that, with all her carmines and her russet spots, she had burst into new bloom. She would have been the chief curiosity and principal attraction in a horticultural exhibition of the present day even more than of the Exposition Universelle of 1878. For me, indeed, she did not seem to say, "I am the Exposition of 1878," but rather, "I am the Allée des Acacias of 1892." It seemed as if she might still have been there. Moreover, just because she had not changed, she scarcely seemed to be alive. She looked like a sterilised rose. I said good afternoon to her and for quite a while she looked at me, trying to recall my name but in vain. Then I told it to her and at once, as though, thanks to this magic name, I had lost the appearance of a strawberry tree or a kangaroo which age had doubtless given me, she recognised me and began to talk to me with that characteristic voice which people who had applauded her in the small theatres and who were invited to lunch with her "in town" were so amazed to hear again in every remark she made throughout the entire conversation, to their hearts' content. That voice had remained the same, unnecessarily warm and alluring, with just a bit of English accent. And yet, just as her eyes seemed to be looking at me from a distant shore, her voice was sad, almost supplicating, like the voices of the dead in the *Odyssey*. Odette could still have gone on the stage. I complimented her on her youthful appearance. "You are very kind, my dear," she replied, and, as it was difficult for her not to give an affected tone even to the sincerest remark, through her anxiety to be well mannered, as she believed, she repeated several times, "Thank you so much, thank you so much." But I, who in former years had travelled so far just for a glimpse of her in the Bois, who, the first time I was at her house, had listened to the sound of her voice coming from her lips like some priceless treasure—I now thought the minutes spent with her interminable because of the impossibility of finding

anything to say to her, and so I moved away. Alas, she was not destined to remain long as she then was. Less than three years later, at a reception given by Gilberte, I was to see her, not in her second childhood but a little feeble-minded, no longer able to hide under an expressionless mask what she was thinking—"thinking" is putting it too strongly; feeling, rather—shaking her head, pursing her lips, shrugging her shoulders at each sensation that came to her, as a drunken man would do, or a child, or like some poets who are oblivious to their surroundings and, if the inspiration comes, write poetry even at a social gathering, or who frown and pout as they go in to dinner with a very much astonished lady on their arm. Mme. de Forcheville's feelings that evening—except the one that had led her to attend Gilberte's reception, namely, affection for her beloved daughter and pride over her holding such a brilliant reception, a pride that was not dimmed by the mother's sadness at no longer being of any importance—were not joyful and merely maintained a continual defence against the humiliations she was subjected to, a timorous defence, like that of a child. One heard on all sides remarks like these: "I don't know whether Mme. de Forcheville recognises me; perhaps I ought to get someone to introduce me again." "You don't need to go to that trouble, I can assure you," the other replied in a very loud voice, without thinking—or, possibly, without caring—that Gilberte's mother was hearing every word. "It's quite unnecessary. For all the pleasure you will get out of it! They leave her in her corner. Besides, she's a bit dotty." Mme. de Forcheville furtively turned her still beautiful eyes on her defamers and then quickly looked away for fear of having been impolite, upset, nevertheless, over the affront but keeping her impotent indignation to herself; you could see her head shaking and her chest heaving; she looked up again at another equally discourteous guest and was not unreasonably surprised for, having felt very poorly for several days, she had indirectly hinted to her daughter to postpone the affair but the daughter

had refused. Mme. de Forcheville did not love her any the less for this; all the duchesses arriving and everybody's admiration of the new residence flooded her heart with joy, and when the Marquise de Sebran, whose salon was so difficult of access even from the topmost rung of the social ladder, came in, Mme. de Forcheville felt that she had been a good, farsighted mother and that her maternal task had been accomplished. More snickering guests caused her to look up again and then talk to herself, if one can call it talking to use a language expressed only by gestures. Still so beautiful, she had become infinitely appealing, something she had never been before; for she who had betrayed Swann and everybody was being betrayed in turn by the whole universe; and she had become so feeble that she no longer dared, now that the rôles were reversed, even defend herself against mankind. And soon she would not put up any defence against death. But now, after anticipating our story in this way, let us return to three years before, that is to say, to the reception we are attending at the home of the Princesse de Guermantes.

Bloch having asked me to introduce him to the master of the house, I did not raise any of the objections I encountered the first day I attended a reception at the Prince de Guermantes', objections which at the time appeared to me perfectly natural, whereas now it seemed such a simple matter to introduce to him one of his own guests, and I would even have thought nothing of taking the liberty of bringing with me and introducing unexpectedly someone he had not invited. Was it because, since that first day now so long ago, I had become one of the "regulars," although now for some time forgotten, of the social circle where that other day I had been such a newcomer; or because, on the contrary, not being a real society man, the things that seemed obstacles to them did not exist for me, once my timidity had disappeared; or was it because, now that people had bit by bit removed for me their first and often their second and third "false faces," I sensed, behind the Prince's

supercilious hauteur, a great human hunger to know his fellow beings, to get acquainted even with those he affected to disdain? Was it, perhaps, also because the Prince had changed, like all those who are overbearing in youth and middle life but whom old age softens (the more so as they had for a long time known by sight the newcomers and the strange ideas they balked at, and knew them to be entertained all around them) especially if the old age has had as adjuvants some virtues or vices which broaden one's contacts, or the revolution in one's ideas provoked by a political conversion such as the Prince's conversion to Dreyfusism?

Bloch questioned me, as I used to question others when I first entered society (and as I still occasionally did) about people I had formerly known socially and who were now as remote and aloof from everything as those people in Combray whom I had often wanted to "place" exactly. But for me Combray had a form so peculiarly its own, so impossible to blend with the rest, that it was like a piece of a jig-saw puzzle which I could never succeed in fitting into the map of France. "Then I can never get the slightest idea what the Prince de Guermantes used to be like by picturing to myself Swann and M. de Charlus?" asked Bloch, whose way of speaking I had long since borrowed and who now often imitated mine. "Not the slightest," I replied. "But where is the difference?" "You could understand only by hearing them talk together, and that is now impossible since Swann is dead and M. de Charlus is not far from it. But the differences between them were enormous." And while Bloch's eyes gleamed at the thought of what the conversation of those remarkable persons must have been, I was thinking that I had been exaggerating to him the pleasure I had had in associating with them, having never experienced any except when alone and a comprehension of the real differences between people coming to us only through our imagination. Did Bloch also notice this exaggeration? "Perhaps you are painting it in too rosy colours," he sug-

gested. "Take for example the mistress of this house, the Princesse de Guermantes; I know she is no longer young but, after all, it isn't so very long ago that you were talking to me about her incomparable charm, her marvellous beauty. I admit, of course, that she has an aristocratic air and also those remarkable eyes you used to tell me about, but on the whole I don't consider her such a matchless wonder as you used to say. She is evidently a thoroughbred but still . . ." I was obliged to tell Bloch that he was not talking of the same person. As a matter of fact, the Princesse de Guermantes had died and this was the former Mme. Verdurin, whom the Prince, ruined by the defeat of Germany, had married and whom Bloch did not recognise. "You're mistaken; I looked in this year's Gotha," Bloch naïvely confessed, "and I found the Prince de Guermantes, living at the address where we are now and married to the bluest of the blue bloods—wait a minute till I recall it—married to Sidonie, Duchesse de Duras, *née* Des Beaux." And, as a matter of fact, shortly after her husband's death, Mme. Verdurin had married the penniless old Duc de Duras, who had thereby made her a cousin of the Prince de Guermantes and had died two years later. He had proved a very useful stepping-stone for Mme. Verdurin, who through a third marriage was now the Princesse de Guermantes and had a very fine social position in the Faubourg Saint-Germain which would have greatly surprised people in Combray, where the ladies of the Rue de l'Oiseau, Mme. Goupil's daughter and Mme. de Sazerat's daughter-in-law, had in recent years, before Mme. Verdurin became the Princesse de Guermantes, been in the habit of saying with a sneer "the Duchesse de Duras," as if that had been a rôle which Mme. Verdurin was playing on the stage. And the caste idea requiring that she should die as "Mme. Verdurin," even her new title, which they did not imagine gave her any enhanced social standing, created, on the whole, a bad impression. "To set tongues wagging"—this expression, which in all ranks of society is applied to a woman who has a lover, might be applied by the Faubourg

Saint-Germain to women who published books, or by the middle-class folk of Combray to women who made ill-assorted marriages as to either age or social status. When she married the Prince de Guermantes, people must have said to one another that he was not really a Guermantes but an impostor. As for myself, when I reflected on this identity of name and title as a result of which there was a second Princesse de Guermantes, who bore no relation to the one who had so fascinated me but no longer existed and was like a defenceless dead person who had been robbed of name and title, it was for me as painful a thing as to see the objects that had belonged to Princess Hedwig, her château and all she had owned, being enjoyed by another woman. Inheriting another person's name is a melancholy thing, like all inheritances, all usurpations of property. And throughout all time, without interruptions, there would come an unbroken wave of Princesses de Guermantes—or rather, replaced in her functions by a different woman in each generation, a single Princesse de Guermantes would live for a thousand years, ignorant of death, indifferent to everything (which changes and wounds our hearts) and from time to time the name, like a sea, would draw together again over those who sank out of sight its changeless and immemorial placidity.

But—in contradiction to this permanence—the oldtimers declared that everything in the social world had changed, that people were received there who never would have been in their time; and this was both true and false. It was false for the reason that they failed to make allowance for the curve of time, by which the people of to-day saw these newcomers when they had already "arrived," whereas the oldtimers recalled them as they were when they started to climb the social ladder. And when those same oldtimers entered society, there were some people there who had "arrived" but whose start others recalled. One generation is long enough for such a change now, whereas it required centuries for the bourgeois name of a Colbert to acquire

noble rank. And from another point of view that statement might be true for, if people change their social status, the most deeply rooted opinions and customs, including that of inviting only the "best" people, also change (the same as fortunes and international alliances and hatreds). Snobbishness does not merely change its form; it might even disappear, like the war, and radicals and Jews be admitted to the Jockey Club.

To be sure, even this outward change in the faces I had known was only the symbol of an inner change which had been going on from day to day. The individuals had, perhaps, continued to do the same things but gradually, the opinion they held of these things and of the people they associated with having a little vitality, at the end of a few years they were fond of very different things and people, although under the same names, and, having themselves become different persons, it would have been surprising if they had not had new faces.

If in these twenty-year periods the conglomerates of social cliques broke up and came together again, according to the attraction of new stars, which were, themselves, destined to pass out of sight and then reappear, crystallisations, then disintegrations, followed by fresh crystallisations, were going on in the souls of the individuals themselves. While the Duchesse de Guermantes had been for me several different persons, to her and to Mme. Swann and others, a given person had been a favourite in the period prior to the Dreyfus case, then a fanatic or an imbecile from the beginning of that affair, which had changed people's values for them and regrouped about itself political parties which since then had again disbanded and re-formed. What helps powerfully to bring this about and adds its influence to the pure intellectual affinities is the passage of time, which makes us forget our antipathies, our dislikes and even the reasons that once explained these antipathies and dislikes. If anyone had in the earlier days analysed the stylish appearance of the young Mme. Léonor de Cambremer, he would have dis-

covered that she was the niece of the shopkeeper in our building, Jupien, and that what had, perhaps, combined with this to make her strikingly attractive was that her uncle * acted as procurer for M. de Charlus. But all that together had produced dazzling effects, while the causes, already remote, not only were unknown to many newcomers, but had been forgotten by many persons who had known them but whose minds were more on the present brilliant show than on the ignominy of the past, for a name is always accepted at its present value. And the interesting thing about these transformations of the salons was that they were also a result of the passage of time and a mnemonic phenomenon.

Among those present that day was a man of standing who, in a notable lawsuit, had just given testimony the weight of which was based solely on his unimpeachable moral character, before which both judges and lawyers had unanimously bowed and which had brought about the condemnation of two persons. There was consequently a stir of curiosity and deference when he entered the room. It was Morel. I was perhaps the only person who knew that he had been "kept" by M. de Charlus and then by Saint-Loup and at the same time by one of the latter's friends. Notwithstanding these past associations he greeted me with pleasure, although with reserve. He remembered the time we met at Balbec and this recollection had for him the poetry and the melancholy of youth.

But there were also some persons whom I could not recognise, never having known them, for in this salon Time had exerted its chemical effect, not only on the individuals themselves but also on the group. This social circle—in the distinctive composition of which, as determined by certain affinities that attracted to it all the leading titled names of Europe, and also by a natural repulsion which alienated any non-aristocratic element, I had found a physical refuge for this name of Guermantes, to which it imparted its last touch

* "Father" in the French text, but reference to earlier volumes in this series indicates that this is an error.—*F.A.B.*

of reality—had itself undergone a profound modification of its inner composition, which I had believed to be immutable. The presence here of people I had seen in a very different social environment and whom I would never have thought likely to make their way into this one surprised me less than the intimately familiar way they were received and called by their first names; a certain aggregate of aristocratic prejudices and snobbishness, which had served automatically to keep away from the Guermantes name everything that did not harmonize with it, had ceased to function.

Certain foreigners who, when I first went out into society, used to give great dinners to which they invited only the Princesse de Guermantes, the Duchesse de Guermantes, the Princesse de Parme, and who were given the place of honour at the houses of these ladies and were regarded as most firmly established in the society of that time (and perhaps really were so) had passed on without leaving any trace. Were they foreigners, here on a diplomatic mission, who had returned home? Or perhaps a scandal, a suicide, an abduction had prevented their appearing any more in society, or maybe they were Germans? But their names had owed their lustre only to the position they were occupying and no one bore them now; people did not even understand whom I was talking about and, if I spelled out their names, it was assumed that they were adventurers.

The persons who, according to the old social code, should not have been there were, to my great astonishment, on terms of close friendship with others of excellent family who had been willing to come and be bored at the Princesse de Guermantes' only for the sake of meeting their new friends. For the distinguishing characteristic of this social set was its prodigious aptitude at wiping out social classifications.

Whether relaxed or broken, the springs of the protective apparatus no longer functioned and much foreign matter was getting in and destroying the homogeneousness and the distinctive appearance and colour of the group. Like a senile old dowager, the Faubourg Saint-Germain replied only with

timid smiles to insolent servants who invaded its drawing-rooms, drank its orangeade and introduced its * mistresses to it. But even so, the sensation of the passage of time and of the wiping out of a part of my vanished past was not so vividly conveyed to me by the breaking up of the oldtime Guermantes salon, that coherent composite of elements whose presence, assiduous attendance and interrelations were accounted for by a thousand reasons, a thousand subtle considerations, as it was explained by the disappearance of even a comprehension of the thousand reasons and considerations as a result of which certain people who still formed part of the salon were quite properly there and in their right place, whereas others who rubbed elbows with them there had a suspicious appearance of novelty. This lack of understanding applied not only to the social world, but also to the political and to everything. For people's memories do not last as long as they do themselves; and besides, some very young folk who had never had the knowledge of the past which the others had lost had now taken their places in society (quite legitimately, even in the aristocratic sense) and, people's origins being forgotten or unknown, everyone was accepted at the point—in his rise or his fall—which he happened to have reached at that time, as if that had always been his social status and as though the present Princesse de Guermantes and Bloch had always had the finest social position, and Clémenceau and Viviani had always been conservatives. And since some facts are more enduring than others, the hated memory of the Dreyfus case persisted vaguely in their minds because of what their fathers had told them about it, and if one mentioned to them that Clémenceau was once a Dreyfusard, they replied, "That's impossible; you are confusing him with someone else; he's on precisely the opposite side." Politicians with a checkered past and former public courtesans were regarded by them as paragons of virtue. Someone having asked a young man of one of the best families if there had not been something off-colour about

* One is tempted to assume an error for "their."—*F.A.B.*

Gilberte's mother, the young gentleman replied that it was true she had married an adventurer by the name of Swann in the early part of her life, but that later on she had married one of the most prominent men in society, the Comte de Forcheville. Doubtless some persons in that drawing-room —the Duchesse de Guermantes, for example—would have smiled at this statement (which seemed monstrous to me, since it denied Swann's fine social standing, although I myself in former years at Combray had believed with my great-aunt that Swann could not know "princesses")—as also some women who might have been present, but who scarcely went out any more, the Duchesses de Montmorency, de Mouchy, de Sagan, who had known Swann intimately but had never even seen Forcheville, who was not received in polite society at the time when they were still going out. But the truth of the matter is that the society of those days, like the faces today so different and the blond hair which had given place to white, no longer existed except in the memories of certain people whose number was diminishing from day to day. During the war Bloch had given up "going out" in the social circles he had been accustomed to frequent and where he cut such a sorry figure. On the other hand, he had not ceased publishing those books of his, the absurd sophistry of which I was to-day striving to demolish so as not to be shackled by it, books devoid of originality but which gave young people and many society women an impression of unusual intellectual eminence, a sort of genius. It was, therefore, after a complete break between his old social life and the present one that, launching out upon a new phase of his career, full of honour and glory, he had made his entry as a great man into a reconstituted social world. The young people did not know that he was making his *début* in society at that age, especially as a few names which he recalled from his association with Saint-Loup enabled him to make his present social prestige seem to date back indefinitely. And anyhow, he seemed to be one of those men of talent who in all ages have flourished in

fashionable society, and it did not occur to them that he might ever have lived in other surroundings.

As soon as I was through talking with the Prince de Guermantes, Bloch took possession of me and introduced me to a young woman who had heard the Duchesse de Guermantes speak of me a good deal. While the people of the newer generations rather looked down on the Duchess because she was acquainted with actresses and such, the ladies of her family—now well along in years—continued to regard her as a most remarkable person, partly because they knew all about her birth, her priority by ancestral rank and her intimate relations with what Mme. de Forcheville would have called "royalties," but also because she scorned family gatherings, was bored by them and it was known she could never be counted on to attend. Her theatrical and political connexions—imperfectly understood, by the way—only increased the infrequency of her appearances and therefore her prestige. In consequence, whereas political and artistic circles considered her a rather vaguely defined person, a sort of unfrocked priestess from the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who went about with under-secretaries of state and theatrical stars, in the Faubourg anyone giving a fashionable affair would say to herself, "Is it any use inviting Marie Sosthènes? She won't come. Well, just for form's sake. But I must not have any illusions." And when, toward half-past ten, Marie Sosthènes appeared in a dazzlingly beautiful gown, stopping at the threshold as though in majestic disdain and shewing in the cold glances she cast in their direction the contempt she appeared to feel for her cousins, if she stayed an hour, it was a more gala occasion for the aristocratic old lady who was giving the affair than it used to be for a theatre director when Sarah Bernhardt, having vaguely promised her coöperation without anyone counting on it, came and, with the utmost obligingness and simplicity, recited, not merely the one piece promised, but twenty more. The presence of Marie Sosthènes, whom cabinet heads addressed condescendingly but who, none the less,

sought to know more and more of them (that is the way people's minds work) sufficed to give to the dowager's affair —although all the other women present were likewise of the highest social standing—a place apart from and above all the other dowagers' affairs of that "season" (to borrow another term from Mme. de Forcheville) which Marie Sosthènes, one of the foremost social leaders of that day, had not bothered to attend. The name of the young woman to whom Bloch introduced me was entirely new to me and the names of the various members of the Guermantes family could not have been very familiar to her, for she asked an American woman on what grounds Mme. de Saint-Loup appeared to be on such intimate terms with all the most prominent people there. Now, this American woman was married to the Comte de Furcy, an undistinguished relative of the Forchevilles, to whom they represented all that was most brilliant in society. Therefore she replied most naturally, "It would be enough that she was born a Forcheville; there is nothing better than that." And yet Mme. de Furcy, while naïvely thinking the name of Forcheville superior to that of Saint-Loup, at least knew what the latter stood for. But the charming friend of Bloch and of the Duchesse de Guermantes was entirely ignorant of this and, being rather scatter-brained, replied in all good faith to a young girl who asked her how Mme. de Saint-Loup was related to the master of the house, the Prince de Guermantes, "Through the Forchevilles," and the young girl passed on this piece of information, as if she had known it all her life, to one of her girl friends, who, being excitable and of a mean disposition, turned as red as a fighting cock when a gentleman told her it was not through the Forchevilles that Gilberte was connected with the Guermantes, so that the gentleman thought he was mistaken, adopted her erroneous idea and promptly proceeded to spread it about. The dinners and social affairs were like a Berlitz School for the American woman. She heard the names and then repeated them without first having learned their value and all their rami-

fications. Someone who asked whether Tansonville had come to Gilberte from her father, M. de Forcheville, was told that it did not come in that way at all, that it was an estate belonging to her husband's family, that Tansonville was near Guermantes and belonged to Mme. de Marsantes but, being heavily mortgaged, had been bought in, as her dowry, by Gilberte. Finally, an elderly gentleman of the old school having spoken of the days when Swann was a friend of the Sagans and the Mouchys, Bloch's American friend asked how I had come to know Swann and he stated that I had met him at Mme. de Guermantes', having no idea that he represented to me the country neighbour, my grandfather's young friend. Mistakes of this character have been made by the most famous men and are regarded as particularly serious in all conservative social circles. When Saint-Simon wishes to shew that Louis XIV was so ignorant that "he sometimes committed the grossest absurdities in public," he cites only two examples of this ignorance, namely, that the King, not knowing that Rénel belonged to the Clermont-Gallerande family and Saint-Hérem to the Montmorin family, treated them both as men of no importance. At least as far as Saint-Hérem is concerned, we have the consolation of knowing that the King did not die in this mistaken opinion, for he was set right "much later" by M. de La Rochefoucauld. "And even at that," Saint-Simon adds, with a shade of condescension, "it was necessary to explain to him what these noble houses were, as their names meant nothing to him." This speedy oblivion, which so quickly covers even the most recent past, and this all-invading ignorance react in a way to confer the rank of erudition on a modest body of knowledge—all the more to be prized because it is so seldom met with—covering the genealogies of people, their true social position, the reasons of love, money or aught else for which they allied themselves to such and such a family or married below their station—a knowledge highly esteemed in all social circles where a conservative spirit prevails, a knowledge which my grandfather

possessed to the highest degree concerning the middle-class folk of Combray and Paris, a knowledge which Saint-Simon valued so highly that, when he comes to extol the marvellous intelligence of the Prince de Conti, even before he mentions the sciences or, rather, as though it were the first of the sciences, he praises him as "a man with a very fine mind, clear, just, accurate, broad, a well read man who forgot nothing, who knew genealogies, their myths and their realities, shewing a discriminating politeness in conformity with rank and social merit, performing all the duties of the princes of the blood which to-day they neglect. He spoke his mind freely, even concerning their usurpations, and the story of books and conversations furnished him opportunity to bring in whatever he considered most agreeable concerning birth, appointments and so forth." Although less brilliant, my grandfather knew with equal accuracy all that had to do with the middle-class folk of Combray and Paris and he relished it with no less of a connoisseur's delight. They had already become rare, those epicures and devotees of genealogy who knew that Gilberte was not a Forcheville, nor Mme. de Cambremer a Méséglise, nor the younger a Valintonais—rare and perhaps not even drawn from the ranks of the highest aristocracy (for it is not necessarily the assiduous churchgoers, nor even the Catholics, who are the most learned about *The Golden Legend* or thirteenth-century stained-glass windows) but often from a secondary aristocracy, more keenly appreciative of what it seldom has an opportunity to approach and which for that very reason it has more leisure to study, reassembling with pleasure, coming to know one another, holding succulent group dinners after the fashion of La Société des Bibliophiles or La Société des Amis de Reims, at which they feast on genealogies. Women are not admitted, but each husband, as he comes home, says to his wife, "It was a most interesting dinner. There was a M. de La Raspelière there who held us spellbound, explaining that that Mme. de Saint-Loup who has the

pretty daughter is not a Forcheville at all. It's as interesting as a novel."

The friend of Bloch and of the Duchesse de Guermantes was not only stylish and charming but also intelligent and it was pleasant to talk with her, but difficult because not only her name was new to me, but also the names of a large number of people she spoke of, who now comprised the basis of that social group. It is true, on the other hand, that when she asked me to tell her about society people I knew, many of the names I mentioned meant absolutely nothing to her; they had all fallen into oblivion—at least, those that had shone only with the individual glory of one person and were not the generic and permanent name of some famous aristocratic family (whose exact title the young woman seldom knew, assuming erroneous origins on the strength of a name she had caught incorrectly at a dinner the night before). Most of the names she had never even heard, not having begun to go out into society (not only because she was still young, but also because she had not been living long in France and had not been invited out at once) until some years after I had withdrawn from social life. Consequently, even though we had a common vocabulary of words for the names, each of us used it differently. Somehow or other, I happened to mention the name of Mme. Leroi and by chance the young woman I was talking with had heard of her through an old friend of Mme. de Guermantes, who was now dancing attendance on her, but she had gotten a false impression, as I could see from the disdainful tone in which this young snob replied, "Do I know who Mme. Leroi is? An old friend of Bergotte," as if to say "a person I would never have been willing to invite to my house." I understood at once that the old friend of Mme. Guermantes, being a well bred man of the world, imbued with the Guermantes spirit, one of the traits of which was not to seem to attach too much importance to aristocratic social connexions, had felt it would be silly and anti-Guermantes to say, "Mme. Leroi, who was received by all the

Royal Highnesses and all the duchesses," and he had preferred to say, " She was rather odd. This is what she replied one day to Bergotte . . ." Only for people who do not know, this sort of information given in conversation is like that given by the press to the common people, who believe alternately, following their newspapers, that M. Loubet and M. Reinach are thieves or fine citizens. To the young woman I was talking with, Mme. Leroi had been a sort of Mme. Verdurin of the earliest manner, with less brilliance and with a "little clan" limited to Bergotte alone. This young woman, by the way, was, by mere chance, one of the last persons to hear the name of Mme. Leroi. To-day no one any longer knows who she was, which is, moreover, quite as it should be. Her name does not even appear in the index of the posthumous memoirs of Mme. de Villeparisis, whose thoughts were so much occupied with Mme. Leroi. The Marquise, I hasten to add, omitted mention of Mme. Leroi not so much because the latter during her lifetime had acted in an unfriendly manner toward her as because nobody could be interested in her after her death, and this silence is dictated, not so much by the woman's rancour over social slights as by the writer's literary sense. My conversation with Bloch's stylish friend was charming, for the young woman was intelligent, but this difference between our respective vocabularies made it difficult, although at the same time instructive. It does us no good to know that the years go by, that youth gives way to old age, that the most stable thrones and fortunes crumble, that fame is ephemeral, our way of forming a conception—and, so to speak, taking a photograph—of this moving universe, hurried along by Time, seeks on the contrary to make it stand still. Consequently, we always see as young the people we knew when they were young, while those whom we knew in their old age we clothe retrospectively in the past with the virtues of old age, and we have unlimited confidence in the credit of a billionaire or in the favour of a sovereign, albeit knowing by our reason, but not

actually believing, that to-morrow they may be fugitives stripped of their power. In a more limited sphere, exclusively social—as though in a simple problem serving as an introduction to more complicated difficulties of the same order—the lack of understanding which in my conversation with the young woman resulted from the fact that we had lived in the same social circle, it is true, but twenty-five years apart, gave me a comprehension of the real nature of history and might have strengthened my historical sense. It should, moreover, be noted that this ignorance of the true situations which, every ten years, brings the elect to the surface as they appear to-day and as though the past did not exist, which prevents a recently landed American woman from seeing that M. de Charlus had the finest social position in Paris at a time when Bloch had none at all, and that Swann, who went to so much trouble for M. Bontemps, had been treated in the friendliest manner by the Prince of Wales—this ignorance does not exist only among the newcomers in society, but also among those who have always frequented closely related groups and, in both these cases, it is again one of the effects of Time (but acting in this instance not on the social curve, but on the individual). It is true, no matter how much we may change our social environment, our style of living, nevertheless our memory, by retaining the thread of our continuous personality, attaches to it through the successive periods the recollection of the various social groups in which we have lived even forty years before. Bloch at the Prince de Guermantes' reception was perfectly aware of the humble Jewish environment in which he had lived at the age of eighteen; and Swann, when he had ceased to love Mme. Swann but was in love with a woman who served tea at the same Colombin's where Mme. Swann for some time thought it was "chic" to go, as to the tea-room in the Rue Royale, was very well aware of his own social standing, remembering Twickenham, and had no doubts concerning the reasons why he went to Colombin's rather than to the Duchesse de Broglie's, knowing perfectly well that, even had

he been a thousand times lower in the social scale, this would not have prevented him from going to Colombin's or to the Ritz Hotel, since anyone can go there if he pays. Doubtless Bloch's and Swann's friends also remembered the humble Jewish environment and the invitations to Twickenham and therefore these friends, thinking of the Swann and Bloch of those days as other selves somewhat less distinct, did not separate in their memory the fashionable Bloch of to-day from the sordid Bloch of former years, or the Swann of Colombin's in the last years of his life from the Swann of Buckingham Palace. But these friends were, in a way, Swann's neighbors in life; their own lives had progressed along lines sufficiently close for their memories to be filled with recollections of him; while in the case of others less close to him, at a greater distance from him, not socially speaking but as far as intimacy was concerned, so that the acquaintance had been more vague and the meetings less frequent, the relative paucity of recollections had rendered their idea of him more hazy. Now, virtual strangers like this at the end of thirty years no longer remember anything specific which could connect the man they have before them to-day with the distant past and thereby affect his present social standing. In the last years of Swann's life, I heard society people who should have known better say when he was mentioned, as though that had been his sole title to fame, "You mean the Swann of Colombin's?" And now I heard people who should have known better say, speaking of Bloch, "The Guermantes Bloch? The close friend of the Guermantes?" These mistakes which bisect a human life and, by isolating the present from the past, make of the man in question another and very different man, as though freshly created the day before, a man who is merely the condensation of his present habits (whereas he carries within himself the continuity of his life, which connects him with the past) these mistakes are also dependent on Time, but they are a mnemonic phenomenon, not a social one. At that very moment I had an example—of a somewhat different

sort, it is true, but only the more striking for that reason—of this forgetfulness which changes the appearance of people in our eyes. A young nephew of Mme. de Guermantes, the Marquis de Villemandois, had formerly been so persistently insolent toward me that I had been forced, in retaliation, to adopt such an insulting attitude toward him that we had tacitly become virtual enemies. While I was meditating on Time at this reception at the Princesse de Guermantes', he got someone to introduce him to me, saying that he believed I had known some of his relatives and that he had read some articles of mine and was anxious to make (or renew) my acquaintance. It is only right to say that, as he had grown older, his impertinence, as so often happens, had given way to seriousness and he no longer had the same arrogant manner, also that people were talking about me in the social circle he frequented because of some articles—of very slender value, however. But these reasons for his cordiality and his advances to me were only secondary. The principal reason or, at any rate, the one that made it possible for the others to come into play, was that, either because he had a poorer memory than I or because he had paid less attention to my retorts than I had to his offensive remarks, I being a less important personage in his eyes at that time than he in mine, he had completely forgotten our unfriendly relations. At the most, my name recalled to him that he must have seen me or one of my family at the house of one of his aunts and, not being exactly sure whether we had met before, he hastened to mention the aunt at whose house he felt certain he must have met me, remembering that they often used to speak of me, but not remembering our quarrels. A name is frequently all that is left to us of a human being, not when he is dead but even while he is still alive. And our present ideas about him are so vague or so strange and correspond so little to those we formerly had of him that we have entirely forgotten that we came near fighting a duel with him, but we do recall that, when a child, he used to wear queer yellow leggings in the Champs-Elysées, although he, on the con-

trary, in spite of our assurances, has no recollection of having played with us in them. Bloch had come in, leaping like a hyena. I thought to myself, "He comes into drawing-rooms now where he could not have gotten a foot in twenty years ago." But then, too, he was twenty years older. He was that much nearer death. So what good did that do him? From close up, in the translucency of a face in which, when seen from afar and in a dim light, I had discerned only gay youthfulness—either persisting there or evoked by me from my memory—there was to be found the anxious, almost terrifying countenance of an old Shylock, "made up" and waiting in the wings for the moment to go on the stage and already reciting his first lines in a low voice. Ten years hence, in these same drawing-rooms, whose impotence will have forced his acceptance as master, he will come in on crutches, thinking it a tiresome duty to have to go to call on the La Trémoïlles. And what good did that do him?

From the changes which had occurred in society I could all the more readily extract some important truths, suitable to give cohesiveness to part of my book, because they were in no way peculiar to our time, as I might at first have been tempted to believe. When I myself, just entering society and more of a newcomer even than Bloch is now, had been received into the Guermantes circle, I must have regarded as forming an integral part of this circle some elements, wholly different from it and only recently admitted, who seemed new and strange to older members of the group whom I did not distinguish from them and who, in their turn, although supposed by the dukes of that time to have been members of the Faubourg since the very beginning, had one time been *parvenus*, either they or their fathers or grandfathers. Consequently, it was not their standing as members of the best society which made this company so brilliant, but it was the fact of having been more or less completely assimilated by this social circle which gave their standing to people who, fifty years later, all seemed to be on the same social footing. Even in that past to which I traced back the Guermantes

name in order to give it all its grandeur (and with good reason, by the way, for under Louis XIV the Guermantes, being almost a royal family, occupied an even more prominent position in society than to-day) the phenomenon that I was now observing used also to occur. Do we not find them at that time allying themselves by marriage, for example, with the Colbert family, which to-day seems to us of very noble rank, it is true, since marrying a Colbert is regarded as a fine match for a La Rochefoucauld? But the Guermantes did not ally themselves with the Colberts on account of the latter being noble, for they were simple bourgeois at that time; rather, it was through their alliance with the Guermantes that they became noble. If the name of Haussonville dies out with the present representative of that house, it will perhaps derive its glory from its descent from Mme. de Staël, whereas before the Revolution M. d'Haussonville, one of the first lords of the realm, prided himself before M. Broglie on the fact that he was not acquainted with Mme. de Staël's father and could no more introduce him than could M. Broglie himself, little suspecting that the son of one of them would one day marry the daughter, and the son of the other the granddaughter, of the author of *Corinne*. I realised from what the Duchesse de Guermantes said to me that I might have enjoyed in this social set the standing of a man of fine position who, while not titled, is readily believed to have connexions with the aristocracy dating back many centuries, such a standing as Swann had had and, before him, M. Lebrun, M. Ampère and all those friends of the Duchesse de Broglie, who at the beginning was by no means in the first ranks of society. On the first occasions when I dined at Mme. de Guermantes', how deeply I must have shocked men like M. de Beaucerfeuil, not so much by the fact of my being there as by remarks of mine testifying to my complete ignorance of the memories which made up his past and determined the form of his social habits. Some day, when Bloch was very old and remembered, far in the past, the Guermantes salon as it looked to him to-day, he would feel

the same astonishment, the same vexation, in the presence of similar intruders and ignorant newcomers. And on the other hand, he would doubtless have acquired and would radiate about him those qualities of tact and discretion which I had believed to be the exclusive privilege of men like M. de Norpois, but which come together again and reappear in men who seem to us, above all others, incapable of possessing them. To mention another point, the opportunity which had offered itself for me to be admitted into the Guermantes circle had seemed to me something exceptional. But if I looked beyond myself and my immediate environment, I saw that this social phenomenon was not as isolated as it had at first appeared to me and that, from the Combray basin where I was born, quite numerous after all were the fountains that had risen symmetrically with myself above the liquid mass which had fed them all. To be sure, since circumstances always vary somewhat and temperaments are never exactly alike, it was in entirely different ways that Legrandin (through his nephew's strange marriage) had in his turn succeeded in gaining admittance to this social circle, that Odette's daughter had become related to it and that Swann himself and, finally, I had entered it. To me who had gone through life cloistered within my own existence and seeing it from the inside, Legrandin's life seemed to have no point of resemblance to my own and to have followed a very divergent path, just as the traveller who is following the course of a stream in a deep valley does not see that another stream flowing in a different direction, despite the windings of its course, empties into the same river. But taking a bird's-eye view, as does the statistician who ignores the sentimental reason or the avoidable imprudences which led to the death of this or that person and counts merely the number of persons who die per year, it was evident that several individuals starting from one and the same environment, the depicting of which occupied the opening period of this story, had all made their way into an entirely different environment; and it is probable that, since an average number of marriages are

performed in Paris every year, any other wealthy, cultured, middle-class social group would have furnished an approximately equal proportion of men like Swann, Legrandin, myself and Bloch, whom one would find winding their way to the ocean of "high society." And, by the way, they are easily discernible there, for although the young Comte de Cambremer amazed everyone with his distinguished manner, his grace, his restrained elegance, I recognised in these qualities, as well as in his friendly glance and his eager desire to climb the social ladder, the same traits as had characterised his uncle Legrandin, that is to say, an old friend of my parents who, although of aristocratic mien, was of thoroughly bourgeois extraction.

Kindness, merely a ripening process which has succeeded in sweetening natures more basically acid than Bloch's, is as widespread as the sentiment of justice, thanks to which, if our cause is sound, we need not fear a hostile judge any more than a friendly one. And Bloch's grandchildren would be kind and considerate almost by birth. Bloch himself had not perhaps yet reached that point. But I observed that, whereas he formerly used to pretend to believe that he had to take a two-hour railway journey in order to call on someone who had given him but a perfunctory invitation, now that he was receiving many invitations, not only to luncheon and dinner but to spend a fortnight here and a fortnight there, he refused many of them without announcing the fact or boasting that he had received and declined them. Discretion, in both word and deed, had come to him along with social standing and age, with a sort of social age, if one may use the term. It is true that Bloch had formerly been indiscreet, as well as incapable of kindliness or friendly counsel. But some difficulties and some qualities are not so much attached to this or that individual or to this or that moment of existence, considered from the social point of view. They are, as it were, exterior to the individual, who passed through their beam of light as through various pre-existent, general and inevitable solstices. Doctors who try to ascertain

whether a certain medicine lessens or increases the acidity of the stomach, stimulates or retards its secretions, obtain varying results, not only according to the stomach from which they take a little of its gastric juice but according to whether they take it when the remedy has been more or less completely assimilated.

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Thus, at every point in its existence the name of Guermantes, considered as a conglomerate of all the names it comprised within and around itself, suffered losses and enrolled new elements, like those gardens in which, in a continuous process, flowers scarcely in bud, ready to take the places of those which are beginning to fade, lose their identity in a mass that appears unchanged except to those persons who have not been witnessing the succession of new blooms and therefore have retained in their memories an exact picture of the flowers that have disappeared.

Many a person among those brought together, or revived in my memory, by this afternoon reception recalled to my mind the series of appearances he had presented to me through the succession of various and contrasting circumstances amid which he had come before my eyes, and in this way he threw into relief the various phases of my life, the differences of perspective, even as some chance feature of the landscape, a hill or château, appearing now on the right, now on the left, seems first to tower above a forest, then to rise out of a valley, and thus discloses to the traveller changes of direction and differences of altitude in the road he is following. Going farther and farther back into the past, I finally came upon mental pictures of one and the same person, separated by such long intervals of time and impressed on such widely different phases of my own personality that I had been in the habit of leaving them out of account even when I thought I was reviewing the entire course of my past relations with that person, and I had even ceased to believe that they represented the individual I had formerly known,

and it required the accident of a sudden flash of conscious attention for me to connect them to the original significance they had had for me, as to an etymological root. From the other side of the hedge of pink hawthorn Mlle. Swann gave me a look, the amorous significance of which I had had to reconstruct in retrospect. Mme. Swann's lover—at least, so Combray regarded him—looked at me across that same hedge with a sharp scrutiny which, likewise, did not mean what I thought it did at the time and, besides, he later changed so much that I did not recognise him at all in the person of the gentleman who was looking at a playbill at Balbec, near the Casino, whom I afterwards used to recall to mind by chance every ten years or so, saying to myself, "Why, that was M. de Charlus, away back there! How strange!" Mme. de Guermantes at Dr. Percepied's wedding; Mme. Swann in pink at my great-uncle's; Mme. de Cambremer, Legrandin's sister, so stylish-looking that he was afraid we would ask him to give us a recommendation to her—these memory pictures, as well as many more connected with Swann, Saint-Loup and others, when they recurred to my mind, I found enjoyment in placing like façades at the threshold of my relations with these different people, although they seemed to me to be only illustrations and not impressions made on my mind by the persons themselves, with whom they appeared to have no connexion. Not only is it true that some people have a good memory and others have not (without going as far as the customary continual forgetfulness of Turkish ambassadors)—which makes it possible for the latter always to find room for a contradictory piece of information when reported to them, the preceding one having vanished at the end of a week or its successor having been able to exorcise it. But even if their memories are equally good, two persons do not recall the same items. One of them will have paid little attention to an act which the other will always regret keenly, whereas the former will have caught on the wing, as a friendly and characteristic sign, a word that the latter uttered offhand, almost without

giving it a thought. When one has broached a prophecy that has proved false, the egoistic desire not to have been mistaken shortens one's memory of this prophecy and permits one very soon to maintain that one did not make it. And lastly, a deeper, less selfish interest causes the recollections to vary to such a degree that, for example, the poet who has almost entirely forgotten facts of which one reminds him retains a fugitive impression. That is why after twenty years' absence, in place of the rancours you had expected, you find unintentional and unconscious forgiveness and, on the other hand, so many hatreds, the reason for which you cannot explain—because you have, on your side, forgotten the bad impression you had created. One forgets the dates of events in the lives even of the people one has known best. And because it was at least twenty years since she had first met Bloch, Mme. de Guermantes would have sworn that he had been born into her social circle and, at the age of two, had been dandled on the knee of the Duchesse de Chartres.

And how many times these people had reappeared before my eyes in the course of their lives, the changing circumstances of which seemed to present the same human beings, it is true, but under various forms and for varying purposes; and the diversity of the periods at which my life had been crossed by the thread of the life of each of these persons had finally resulted in the periods which seemed farthest back becoming interwoven as if life had at its disposal only a limited number of threads for weaving the most dissimilar patterns. What could be more widely separated in my diverse past experiences, for example, than my visits to my uncle Adolphe, or the nephew of Mme. de Villeparisis, the Maréchal's cousin, or Legrandin and his sister, or Françoise's friend, the former waistcoat-maker in the courtyard of our building? And to-day all these different strands had been brought together to make the weft here of the Saint-Loup *ménage*, there of the young Cambremer couple of the early days, not to mention Morel and so many others who, coming together, had combined to form such a well defined circum-

stance that it seemed to me that it was the complete unit and the persons merely component parts. And I had already lived long enough so that, for more than one of the human beings with whom I had come in contact, I found in antipodal regions of my past memories another being to complete the picture. To the Elstirs, whom I saw here in a place which was of itself an indication of fame already won, I could add the earliest recollections of the Verdurins and the Cottards, the conversation in the restaurant at Rivebelle, the afternoon tea at which I became acquainted with Albertine, and so many other memories. In much the same way, when an art lover is shewn a panel of an altar screen he remembers in what church, museum and private collection the other panels are dispersed (likewise he finally succeeds, by following the catalogues of art sales or frequenting antique shops, in finding the mate of the object he possesses, thereby completing the pair, and is able to reconstruct in his mind the predella and the entire altar). Just as a bucket being hauled up by a windlass rubs against the rope again and again and on opposite sides, there was no person, hardly even a single object, having occupied a place in my life, that had not successively played different parts in it. A mere social connexion or even a material object, for example—if the recollection of it came back to me a few years later, I observed that life had kept on weaving about it different threads which finally gave it a beautiful velvet coating, like that which in old parks enwraps a plain water pipe in a sheath of emerald.

It was not only the outward appearance of these individuals which suggested dream figures. Even to themselves their earlier life, already slumbering in their youth and past loves, had become more and more a dream. They had forgotten even their rancours and their hates and, in order to convince themselves that the person before them was indeed the one with whom they had not been on speaking terms ten years before, they would have had to consult a register, but this was as vague as a dream in which one was insulted, but

by whom, one can no longer recall. It was just such dreams which produced contradictory situations in political life, where one saw in one and the same cabinet people who had accused one another of murder or treason. And with certain old men this dream became as impenetrable as death in the days immediately following an amorous indulgence. During these days it was impossible to put any question to the President of the Republic; he had lost his memory completely. Then, after one let him rest for a few days, the remembrance of public affairs came back to him as casually as the recollection of a dream.

Sometimes more than one picture came into my mind of this being who was so different from the person I had known since then. During many years I had supposed Bergotte to be a gentle, saint-like old man and had been paralysed as by a ghost at the sight of Swann's grey hat or his wife's violet cloak or by the mystery in which, even in a drawing-room, her ancestral name enveloped the Duchesse de Guermantes—almost legendary origins, a fascinating mythology of social relations which became so banal in later years but which these origins carried back into the past as though up into the boundless sky with a refulgence similar to that which is shed by the sparkling tail of a comet. And even relations that had not had their beginnings in a mysterious past, like mine with Mme. de Souvré, to-day so stiff and purely formal, retained in my earliest recollections of them their first smile, calmer, sweeter, so suavely outlined in the full richness of an afternoon by the sea or the end of a Spring day in Paris, turbulent with carriages, clouds of dust and rippling sunshine. And perhaps Mme. de Souvré would not have counted for much if one had removed her from this frame, like those monuments—Santa Maria della Salute, for example—which, without great beauty of their own, produce an admirable effect in their own setting; but she formed part of a batch of souvenirs which I valued at a certain price, "taken as a lot," without trying to figure out exactly what part should be credited to Mme. de Souvré's personality.

With all these human beings one thing which struck me even more forcibly than the modifications they had undergone in physical appearance and social standing was the change caused by the different ideas they had of one another. Legrandin formerly used to despise Bloch and never addressed a word to him, but now he was very friendly with him. This was not at all because of the better social position to which Bloch had attained, in which case it would not be worth mentioning, for social changes necessarily bring corresponding changes in standing among those concerned. No, the reason was that people—and by "people" I mean what they represent to us—do not have in our memories the fixity of a painting. Their evolution is at the mercy of our forgetfulness. Sometimes this goes so far that we even confuse one person with another. "Bloch? Why, that's someone who used to come to Combray." And by "Bloch" they meant me. Conversely, Mme. de Sazerat was positive that a certain historical treatise on Philip II was by me, whereas it was by Bloch. Without going as far as these substitutions, we forget the sordid tricks someone played us, his bad traits, the last time we parted without shaking hands; and, on the contrary, we remember an earlier occasion when we were on friendly terms. It was to such an antecedent situation that Legrandin's behaviour corresponded in his friendliness toward Bloch, either because he had lost all recollection of a certain period in the past or because he considered it outlawed—a compound of forgiveness, forgetfulness and indifference which is likewise a product of Time. Furthermore, even between lovers, the recollections we have of one another never correspond exactly. I had known Albertine to recall to my mind with marvellous exactitude some remark I had made to her at one of our first meetings which I had completely forgotten, while she had no recollection of some other fact which had been driven into my head for all time, like a pebble. Our parallel lives were like the two borders of a garden path where urns of flowering plants are placed symmetrically at regular intervals, but not opposite

one another. And, with even more reason, it is easy to understand that, in the case of someone we know only slightly, we might scarcely remember who he is, or recall something different and farther back in the past than what we more recently thought of him, something suggested by the people among whom we meet him again and who have known him for only a short time, endowed with social attributes and standing which he did not formerly possess but which we, in our forgetfulness, accept instanter.

It is true that life, in bringing these people across my path, had repeatedly presented them to me under special circumstances which, surrounding them completely, had hemmed in the view I had of them and thereby hindered me from knowing their true natures. Even these Guermantes, who had been the object of such a magnificent dream when I had first approached one of them, later appeared in my life, one in the capacity of one of grandmother's old friends, the other in the person of a gentleman who had stared at me with such a disagreeable air one noonday in the gardens of the Casino. (For between us and other human beings there is a narrow margin of contingencies, as my reading at Combray had shewn me there is of perception, which prevents an absolute contact between the mind and reality.) Consequently, it was only afterwards, when I connected them with the name, that my acquaintance with them became for me acquaintance with the Guermantes. But it may be it was precisely that which made life more poetic for me when I reflected how that mysterious race with piercing eyes and bird-like beaks, that pink, golden, unapproachable race, had so often and so naturally, as a result of blind and varying circumstances, happened to offer itself for my contemplation, for social intercourse and even intimate friendship with me, to such an extent that, when I wished to make the acquaintance of Mlle. Stermaria or to have some gowns made for Albertine, it was to members of the Guermantes family that I turned, as to my most helpful friends. It is true that it bored me as much to go to call on them as on the other so-

ciety people I met later. Even in the case of the Duchesse de Guermantes (as with certain of Bergotte's pages) I felt her charm only from afar; it vanished when I came near her because it existed only in my memory and my imagination. But when all was said and done, the Guermantes, and Gilberte also, differed from the other society folk in that they plunged their roots deeper into a period of my past life when I used to dream more and had more faith in people. What came over me with ennui as I talked now with any of them was at any rate those of my childhood fantasies which had seemed to me the most beautiful and the most inaccessible, and I consoled myself, like a merchant who becomes entangled in his bookkeeping, by confusing the value of possessing them with the price at which my desire had appraised them.

But in the case of other persons, the memory of my earlier relations with them was turgid with more ardent dreams, conceived without hope, in which my life of that time, wholly consecrated to them, expanded so richly that I found it difficult to understand how the realisation of those dreams could possibly be this thin, narrow, lustreless ribbon of zestless, unprized intimacy in which I was unable to recapture the slightest vestige of what had constituted their mystery, their fine frenzy and their sweetness.

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"What has become of the Marquise d'Arpajon?" asked Mme. de Cambremer. "Why, she is dead," Bloch replied. "You are confusing her with the Comtesse d'Arpajon, who died last year." Thereupon the Princesse de Malte joined in the discussion; as the young widow of an aged, wealthy nobleman, bearer of an illustrious name, she was much sought after in marriage and this had given her a great deal of assurance. "The Marquise d'Arpajon," she interposed, "also died about a year ago." "What! a year ago? I assure you that is not so," replied Mme. de Cambremer. "I attended a musicale at her house less than a year ago."

Bloch could not take an effective part in this discussion, any more than could the "gigolos" of polite society, because all these deaths of old persons were too remote from them, either on account of a very great difference in age or, as in Bloch's case, because of recent admission into a strange social circle, which he was entering at a tangent and at a time when it was on the decline in a fading light where the memory of a past with which he was unacquainted could not enlighten him. And for people of the same age and social standing as the deceased, death had lost much of its weird significance. Moreover, one sent every day to get news of so many people *in articulo mortis,* some of whom had recovered while others had succumbed, that one no longer remembered exactly whether a certain person whom one never had an opportunity to see had gotten well, or had died, of his inflammation of the lungs. Death became more frequent and more uncertain in these aged regions. At this meeting-point of two generations and two social strata, which for different reasons were poorly placed for viewing death clearly and therefore were inclined to confuse it with life, death had become a social formula which described a person approximately and, without indicating by the tone of one's voice that this incident was the end of everything, one would say, "But you forget that So-and-so is dead"—in the same way as one would have said, "He has been decorated" (the attribute is different but no more important), "He is a member of the Academy" or—which amounted to the same thing, since it prevented attendance at social functions—"He has gone south for the winter; he has been ordered to the mountains." It was not so difficult in the case of well known men; what they left behind helped one to remember that their earthly existence had come to an end. But with ordinary society folk very advanced in years, one became confused as to whether they were dead or alive, not only because one was unfamiliar with their past or had forgotten it, but also because they had no connexion whatsoever with the future. And the difficulty everybody had in distinguishing

between the aged society folk who were dead and those who were sick or out of town or living in the country, established the insignificance of the dead quite as definitely as did the lack of interest of those who were in doubt.

"But if she is not dead, how does it happen one never sees her any more, nor her husband either?" inquired a spinster who liked to make witty remarks. "I tell you," replied her mother who, although fifty years of age, never missed a society function, "it's because they're old; people of that age don't go out any more." It seemed as though there were in front of the cemetery an entire segregated district of old people, the lamps in its foggy streets always lighted. Mme. de Sainte-Euverte brought the discussion to a close by explaining that the Comtesse d'Arpajon had died a year before, after a long illness, but that the Marquise d'Arpajon had also died, although more recently and very suddenly, "of some utterly insignificant ailment"—wherein her death resembled the lives of all these people and also explained why she passed away unnoticed, and excused people's confusing her with the Countess. On hearing that Mme. d'Arpajon really was dead, the unmarried woman cast an anxious glance at her mother who, she feared, might be shocked to learn of the death of one of her contemporaries; in anticipation she pictured herself hearing people say, in explanation of her mother's death, "The death of Mme. d'Arpajon was a great shock to her." But the mother, on the contrary, every time someone of her own age "passed on," felt as if she had carried off the prize in a contest with distinguished competitors. Their death furnished the only means left to her of being made agreeably conscious of her own existence. The spinster noticed that her mother, who had not seemed sorry to announce that Mme. d'Arpajon was a recluse in one of those abodes whence enfeebled old folk seldom issue forth again, had been even less grieved to learn that the Marquise had entered the City of the Hereafter, whence there is no return. The old maid's caustic spirit was amused to note this indifference on her mother's part. And

later on she entertained her friends with a "side-splitting" story of the sprightly way she claimed her mother had remarked, rubbing her hands together, "My God, so poor Mme. d'Arpajon is really dead!" Even people who did not need this death to make them rejoice that they were still alive found happiness in it. For every death simplifies existence for others, relieves them of the need of scrupulously shewing their gratitude or the obligation to pay calls. However, as I have already related, the death of M. Verdurin was not received in this manner by Elstir.

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One lady left, for she had other receptions to go to and she was to have tea with two queens. It was that famous society courtesan whom I had formerly known, the Princesse de Nassau. Except for the fact that she was not as tall as formerly—which, because of her head now being on a lower level, gave her the air of having "one foot in the grave," as people say—one could scarcely have said that she looked any older. With her Austrian nose and her charming glance, she was still a Marie-Antoinette, well preserved, embalmed with a thousand cosmetics adorably combined to give a lilac hue to her complexion. Over her features floated a vague, regretful expression of being forced to leave, of tenderly promising to return, of discreetly slipping out on account of the large number of élite gatherings at which she was expected. Born almost on the steps of a throne, married three times, long and luxuriously supported by big bankers (without counting the innumerable passing fancies she had allowed herself) she bore as lightly as she did her exquisite round eyes, delicately painted face and mauve gown, the somewhat jumbled memories of her thickly peopled past. As she passed in front of me, running away "*à l'anglaise,*" I bowed to her. She recognised me, clasped my hand and fixed her round, mauve-coloured eyes on me with an expression that seemed to say, "How long since we last met—let's

talk about it some other time." She pressed my hand firmly, unable to recall exactly whether or not, one evening when she was taking me home from the Duchesse de Guermantes', there had been a love passage between us. Just on a chance, she appeared to allude to something that had never happened, which was not hard for her to do, because she would put on a tender air over a strawberry tart and, if obliged to leave before the end of the music, would assume an attitude as if heartbroken over a sudden departure which, however, was not to be final. Furthermore, in doubt concerning that incident with me, she did not prolong the furtive handclasp or utter a word, but merely looked at me, as I have said, in a way that signified, "How long it has been!" And in this look there passed in review her husbands, the men who had "kept" her, two wars; and her star-like eyes, like an astronomical clock carved out of an opal, marked successively all those solemn hours of a far distant past, which she recaptured at any moment when she wished to give you a greeting which was always at the same time an apology. Then, leaving me, she hurried toward the door so that no one should go to any trouble on her account and to shew me that the reason she had not stopped to talk with me was because she was in a hurry—also to make up for the minute lost in shaking hands with me, lest she be late at the residence of the Queen of Spain, with whom she was to have tea alone. Even when she was near the door, I thought she was going to break into a run. As a matter of fact, she was running toward her grave.

All this while the Princesse de Guermantes could be heard repeating with an excited air and a metallic rattle in her voice, caused by her false teeth, "That's it! We'll get up a little clan! How I like these intelligent young people who take part in everything! Ah, what a muzhishian you are!" She talked on, her big monocle in her round eye, which seemed partly amused and partly apologising for its inability to keep up the gaiety for a long time; but to the very last

she was determined to "take part in everything" and "get up a little clan."

* * *

I sat down beside Gilberte de Saint-Loup. We talked a great deal of Robert. Gilberte spoke of him in a deferential tone, as if he had been some superior being whom she was anxious to shew me she had admired and understood. We reminded one another how the ideas he used to develop concerning military strategy (for he had often repeated to her at Tansonville the same theories that I had heard him sustain at Doncières and afterwards) had often and in many points, after all, been verified by the late war. "I cannot tell you how vividly the slightest thing he said to me at Doncières comes back to me now and did also during the war. The last words I heard him utter when we parted, never to meet again, were that he expected Hindenburg, as a Napoleonic general, to maneuver for a battle along the lines of one of the Napoleonic types, the one which aims to separate two opponents, 'perhaps the English and ourselves,' he added. And indeed, scarcely a year after Robert's death, a critic for whom he had a profound admiration and who obviously exercised great influence over his military ideas, M. Henry Bidou, said that Hindenburg's offensive in March, 1918, was 'the battle of one army massed to separate two opponents aligned against it, a maneuver in which Napoleon succeeded on the Apennines in 1796, but failed in Belgium in 1815.' A few minutes before we parted, Robert was drawing a comparison for me between battles and plays in which it is not always easy to know what the author intended or in which he changed his plan as he went along. Now, as far as the German offensive of 1918 is concerned, doubtless Robert would not agree with M. Bidou in interpreting it in this way; but other critics believe that it was Hindenburg's successful advance in the direction of Amiens, then his enforced halt, his success in Flanders and then another check which—accidentally, after all—made Amiens and then Bou-

logne objectives which he had not at first set before himself. And since everyone can rewrite a play to suit himself, some see in this offensive the announcement of a lightning-like march on Paris; others, merely random lunges in an effort to destroy the British army. And even if the orders given by the commander-in-chief contradict this or that theory, the critics will always have left the possibility of retorting, as Mounet-Sully did to Coquelin when assured by the latter that *Le Misanthrope* was not the sad, theatrical play he wished to make it (for Molière, according to the testimony of contemporaries, gave it a comic interpretation which provoked laughter) 'Well, then, Molière was wrong'."

"And about the airplanes," Gilberte remarked, "do you remember how he used to say—he had such apt expressions—that each army must be a hundred-eyed Argus? Alas, he did not live to see his statements substantiated." "Oh yes, he did," I replied. "At the Battle of the Somme, he knew very well that they first blinded the enemy by putting out his eyes, that is, by destroying his airplanes and captive balloons." "Yes, that is true." And during the years she had been living an exclusively intellectual life, she had become somewhat pedantic. "And how he used to maintain that people would come back to ancient methods! Do you know that the Mesopotamian expeditions in this war"—she must have read it at the time in Brichot's articles—"recall continually and without a single change Xenophon's retreat? And to go from the Tigris to the Euphrates, the British high command made use of *bellones*, long, narrow boats, local gondolas, which were already in use among the most ancient Chaldeans." These remarks conveyed to me the feeling of that stagnation of the past, which in certain places, by a sort of specific gravity, becomes indefinitely immobile, so that one finds it just as it was in former times. And I admit that, thinking of my reading at Balbec, not far away from Robert, I was greatly impressed—as when, in a French countryside, I came across a trench described by Mme. de Sévigné—or in the Orient, in connexion with the siege of Kut-el-Amara

("Kut-the-Emir, as we say Vaux-le-Vicomte and Boilleau-l'Evêque," the *curé* of Combray would have said if he had extended his thirst for etymology to the Oriental languages) to see reappear in the neighbourhood of Bagdad the name of Bassorah which is so frequently mentioned in *The Arabian Nights* and whither, in the days of the Caliphs, long before General Townshend, Sinbad the Sailor repairs each time to embark or disembark after leaving Bagdad or before returning there.

"There is one phase of war which he was beginning to grasp," I went on, "namely, that it is human, that people live it as they do a love or a hatred, and that it could be told like a novel and consequently that, if someone goes about repeating that strategy is a science, this does not help him at all to understand war, which is not strategic. The enemy does not know our plans any more than we know the end which the woman we love is pursuing—and it may be that we do not know these plans ourselves. In their offensive of March, 1918, did the Germans have as their objective the capture of Amiens? We do not know at all. Perhaps they did not know themselves and it may have been the outcome of their advance westward toward Amiens which determined their plan. And even supposing war to be scientific, one would still have to depict it as Elstir did the sea, in inverse order, starting with illusions and beliefs which one corrects bit by bit, as Dostoievsky would relate the story of a life. Moreover, it is only too certain that war is not strategic but medical instead, and subject to unforeseen accidents, such as the Russian revolution, which the clinician might have hoped to forestall."

Throughout this conversation, Gilberte had spoken of Robert with a deference that seemed to be addressed more to my old friend than to her deceased husband. She seemed to be saying to me, "I know how much you admired him. I assure you, I was able to appreciate what a superior being he was." And yet the love she certainly no longer felt for his memory was perhaps still the remote cause of certain

peculiar features of her present life. For example, Andrée was now her inseparable friend. Although the latter, thanks especially to her husband's talent and her own intelligence, was beginning to make her way, not, to be sure, into the Guermantes coterie, but into a social set infinitely more fashionable than the one she used to frequent, people were surprised that the Marquise de Saint-Loup should condescend to become her best friend. This seemed to be an indication of Gilberte's penchant for what she considered an artistic life, even at the cost of real damage to her social standing. That may be the correct explanation. However, another came to my mind, always impressed with the way in which the figures we see gathered together anywhere are usually the reflexion, or in one way or another the consequence, of a prior grouping of other figures far removed from the later group and somewhat different, although symmetrical with it. It occurred to me that if Andrée, her husband and Gilberte were to be seen together every evening, this was possibly because, many years before, the man who later became Andrée's husband was to be seen living with Rachel and then leaving her for Andrée. It is probable that Gilberte, living in a social world above and remote from theirs, knew nothing about this at the time. But she must have heard about it later, when Andrée had climbed, and she had descended, the social scale sufficiently for them to come within one another's vision. Then Gilberte must have felt strongly the prestige of the woman for whom Rachel had been abandoned by a man who must have had great charm, since Rachel had preferred him to Robert.

Thus, perhaps, the sight of Andrée recalled to Gilberte the youthful romance of her love for Saint-Loup and also inspired her with great respect for the woman that was still adored by a man who had aroused such a strong affection in the very Rachel who, she realised, had been more deeply loved by Robert than she herself had been. It may be, on the contrary, that these memories of the past had no part in Gilberte's predilection for this artistic couple and that one

should see in it, as with many people, simply the indulgence of two tendencies habitually inseparable in society women, to become well informed and to associate with people of much lower social standing. Perhaps Gilberte had forgotten Robert as completely as I had Albertine and, even if she knew it was Rachel that the artist had given up for Andrée, it may be that she never thought of this fact when she saw them and that it had never played any part in her liking for them. In order to decide whether my first explanation was, not merely possible but true, one would have had to obtain the testimony of those concerned, the only recourse left in such cases, provided they could bring to their confession clear insight and sincerity. But the former is seldom met with and the latter never.

"But how does it happen you come to such a crowded reception?" Gilberte asked me. "To run across you at a mad scramble like this doesn't fit in with my idea of you. I certainly would have expected to meet you anywhere else except at one of my aunt's big jamborees, since aunt it must be," she added with a touch of sarcasm; for, having become Mme. de Saint-Loup a little while before Mme. Verdurin had married into the family, she considered herself to be one of the original Guermantes and to have been compromised by her uncle's marriage with someone so far below him as Mme. Verdurin, whom, it is true, she had heard ridiculed on countless occasions by members of the family in her presence, while of course it was only behind her back that they had talked of the *mésalliance* Saint-Loup had contracted in marrying her. Moreover, she affected all the more disdain for this "off-colour" aunt because the Princesse de Guermantes, through the sort of perversity which impels intelligent people to fall below their customary standard of conduct, and also through the need old people feel for recollections of the past, in order to try to give a background to her newly acquired elegance, was fond of saying, when she spoke of Gilberte, "I assure you she is not a new acquaintance to me. I knew the girl's mother very well; why, she was a close

friend of my cousin, Mme. de Marsantes, and it was at my house she met Gilberte's father. As for poor Saint-Loup, I knew his entire family long before that; why, his uncle used to be an intimate friend of mine at La Raspelière." "You see, the Verdurins weren't bohemians at all," people used to say to me after hearing the Princesse de Guermantes talk in this way. "They have been friends of Mme. de Saint-Loup's family from away back." I was perhaps the only one who knew (through my grandfather) that it was quite true the Verdurins were not bohemians, but that was not exactly because they had known Odette. But it is easy to dress up stories of a past that no one any longer remembers, like tales of travel to countries no one has ever visited. "Well then," Gilberte concluded, "since you do occasionally come out of your 'ivory tower', wouldn't informal little gatherings at my house, to which I would invite congenial spirits, be more to your liking? Big affairs like this were not made for you. I saw you talking with my Aunt Oriane, who may have all the fine qualities one could wish but who, I think you will agree, it is not unfair to say is not one of the intellectual élite." I could not explain to Gilberte the thoughts that had been going through my mind for the past hour, but it occurred to me that, when it came to mere entertainment, she might furnish opportunities for pleasant diversion which I did not, as a matter of fact, believe I should find in discussing literature with the Duchesse de Guermantes any more than with Mme. de Saint-Loup. It is true that I intended to resume the very next day my solitary existence, but with a definite purpose this time. I would not even let people come to call on me at my home during my working hours, for the obligation to accomplish my literary task took precedence over the duty to be courteous or even kind. Doubtless the friends who had not seen me for such a long time and who had just met me again and thought me in good health once more would be insistent. They would come with their importunate demands when the toil of the day—or of their lives—was done or interrupted, with the same need of

me as I used to feel for Saint-Loup, because, as I had already noticed at Combray when my parents scolded me just after I had, unbeknownst to them, made most commendable resolutions, the subjective chronometers allotted to men are not all regulated to keep the same time; one strikes the hour of rest while the other is summoning to work; one announces the moment for the judge to pronounce sentence long after the guilty one has heard the call to repentance and reformation. But to those who might come to see me or who might send for me, I would have the courage to reply that I had an imperative and vitally important engagement with myself for certain essential matters which I must learn about without delay. And, although there is little connexion between our true self and the other, on account of the identical name and common body the self-denial which leads one to sacrifice the easiest duties and even pleasures is mistaken by others for selfishness. And if I was going to live apart from the people who would complain of not seeing me, was it not precisely so that I might devote myself to them—more thoroughly than I could have done in their company—seek to reveal them to themselves, to arrive at their true natures? What would it profit me to waste my evenings for years to come in sending after the disappearing echo of their remarks the equally empty sound of my own, for the fruitless pleasure of social contacts in which any penetrating meditation is impossible? Was it not more worth while that I should study the gestures they made, the words they uttered, their lives, their natures, and endeavour to plot the curve and induce the general law? Unfortunately, I should have to struggle against our habit of putting ourselves in the place of others which, although possibly favourable to the conception of a literary work, is detrimental to the execution of it. For through excessive politeness it impels us to sacrifice to others, not only our pleasure but our duty, when, putting ourselves in the place of another, our duty, of whatever nature—even that of helping out in the rear when one could be of no service at the front—appears to us as our own pleasure, which in

reality it is not. And far from considering myself unfortunate, as some of the greatest men have done, in having to live without friends or social converse, I understood that the inspirational forces which one expends in friendship are a sort of blind door to an individual friendship which leads nowhere, and that these forces are diverted from a truth toward which they might have led us. But after all, when periods of relaxation and companionship became necessary, I realised that, in place of the intellectual conversations which society folk believe helpful to writers, slight love affairs with young girls in the first bloom of youth would furnish a select pabulum which I might, when strictly necessary, allow to my imagination, like the famous horse that was fed exclusively on roses! What I suddenly wished for all over again was what I had dreamed of at Balbec when I saw Albertine, Andrée and their friends walking by the sea, before I had come to know them. But alas! it was too late to endeavour to find again the same young girls for whom I felt at that moment such a strong desire. The action of the years, which had worked such changes in all the human beings I had seen that day, and even in Gilberte, had surely transformed all the young girls who were still living—and would have transformed Albertine, had she not died—into women far too different from my recollection of them. I suffered from an inner yearning to find and be with them once more, for time, which changes people, does not alter the recollection we have of them. Nothing is more painful than this contrast between the changes in people and the unchangeableness of our remembrance of them when we realise that something which has retained such freshness in our memory cannot possibly still have any in actual life, that we cannot draw near outwardly to what, in our inner thoughts, seems to us so beautiful and kindles in us, notwithstanding, such a strongly individual longing to see it again. This powerful desire which memory aroused in me for those young girls seen years before, I realised I could not hope to gratify unless by seeking to find it in someone of that same age—

in other words, in someone else than them. Often I had had a suspicion that what seems peculiar to someone we desire does not belong to that person. But the passage of time was furnishing me a more complete proof of this, since, after the lapse of twenty years, I had a spontaneous urge to seek, in place of the young girls I had known, others now enjoying the youth they had at that time. Moreover, there is more in this than merely an awakening of our fleshly desires, which does not correspond to any reality because it takes no account of the time that has passed. There came over me at times a wish that, by some miracle, my grandmother or Albertine, still alive (contrary to what I had believed) might come into the room where I was. I thought I saw them, my heart leaped toward them. Only I forgot one thing, that if they really had been alive, Albertine would now look about as Mme. Cottard did to me at Balbec, and my grandmother, being more than ninety-five years old, would by no means rejoice my sight with that beautiful, calm, smiling countenance with which I even now still pictured her to myself as arbitrarily as we put a beard on God the Father or as they were accustomed in the seventeenth century to represent the heroes of Homer in all the trappings of a noble lord, without regard to their antiquity. I looked at Gilberte and did not think to myself, "I would like to see her again," but I told her it would always give me pleasure to be invited by her to meet some young girls, but without harbouring the intention of asking anything more of them than to reawaken in me the reveries and sorrows of earlier years—and mayhap, on some unlikely day, a chaste kiss. Just as Elstir loved to have before his eyes, in the person of his wife, the Venetian beauty which he had so often reproduced in his paintings, I allowed myself the excuse of being attracted by a certain æsthetic selfishness toward beautiful women who might cause me suffering and I had a certain feeling of idolatry for the future Gilbertes, Duchesses de Guermantes and Albertines whom I might meet and from whom it seemed to me I might get inspiration, like a sculptor strolling about among

beautiful old marble statuary. I ought, however, to have remembered that prior to each of those attachments there was my feeling for the mystery which pervaded them and that therefore, instead of asking Gilberte to introduce me to some young girls, I would have done better to go to places where we are not connected with them in any way, where we feel some insuperable barrier between them and us, where, two paces from them on the beach, going to bathe, one feels separated from them by the impossible. It was in this way that my feeling for the mysterious had been able to attach itself successively to Gilberte, the Duchesse de Guermantes, Albertine and so many others. To be sure, the unknown and almost unknowable had become the common, the familiar, a matter of indifference or a source of pain, but always retaining a certain charm from what it had once been. And to tell the truth, as on the calendars the letter carrier brings us to get his New Year's gift, there was not a year of my life which had not had as its frontispiece or inserted among its days the picture of a woman I had ardently desired, a picture that was often all the more arbitrary because sometimes I had never seen the woman, as, for instance, Mme. Putbus's maid, Mlle. d'Orgeville or some young girl whose name I had seen in the society column of a newspaper amid the bevy of charming dancers. I sensed her to be beautiful, lost my heart to her and created for her an imaginary body which dominated with its full height a landscape of the region where I had read in *L'Annuaire des Châteaux* her family's estate was situated. In the case of the women I had come to know, this setting was at least double. Each of them stood out prominently at a different point in my life, rising like a protecting local deity, first, from the midst of one of those dream-world landscapes which, side by side, made a checkerboard of my life and in which I had become fond of imagining her; secondly, seen with the eyes of memory in the settings where I had known her, which she recalled to me by fixed association—for even though our life be a roving one, our memory is sedentary

and, no matter how ceaselessly we may rush about, our recollections, riveted to the places from which we tear ourselves away, continue to lead their stay-at-home existence there, like the temporary friends a traveller makes in a town and has to abandon when he leaves because it is there that they, who do not go away, will end their journey and their lives, as if he were still there, by the church, before the door, under the trees of the promenade. Thus it was that the shadow of Gilberte lay, not only before a church in the Ile-de-France where I had pictured her to myself, but also on the path of a park along the Méséglise way, and the shadow of Mme. de Guermantes in a moist roadway where red and violet clusters rose in spikes, or else over the golden morning brightness of a Parisian sidewalk. And this second person, the one born not of desire but of memory, was not in the case of either of these women the only one. For I had known each of them under diverse circumstances and at different times, when she was quite another person for me and I myself was a different being, immersed in dreams of another colour. Now, the law which had governed the dreams of each year maintaining grouped around them the memories of a woman I had known during that period, everything relating to the Duchesse de Guermantes during my childhood, for example, was by magnetic attraction centered around Combray, and everything that had to do with the Duchesse de Guermantes who was shortly going to invite me to luncheon centered around a very different sensitive being; there were several Duchesses de Guermantes (as there had been several Mme. Swanns since "the lady in pink") separated by the colourless ether of the years, and I could no more leap from one to the other than if this had required my stepping from one planet to another across the intervening ether. Not only separate, but different, arrayed in dreams I had had at such different times, like a special flora not to be found on another planet; and this was so true that, after having reflected that I would go to luncheon with neither Mme. de Forcheville nor Mme. de Guermantes,

I could not have affirmed—for that would have transported me into another world—that one was not a different person from the Duchesse de Guermantes, descendant of Geneviève de Brabant, and the other a different person from "the lady in pink," had not a well educated man within me assured me of it with the same authority with which a scientist might have assured me that a milky way of nebulæ was due to the segmentation of one single star. In like manner Gilberte was now to me only Mme. de Saint-Loup, even though, without realising just what I was doing, I was asking her to let me have some friends such as she had once been to me. Seeing her, I no longer meditated on the part that my admiration for Bergotte—but a Bergotte once more for me merely the author of his books—had played in my love (which likewise she had forgotten) without recalling (except in rare and entirely isolated impressions) my emotion at being introduced to the man, my disappointment, my astonishment over his conversation, in the drawing-room with the white furs, filled with violets, where so many lamps were brought in very early and placed on so many different consoles. All the memories that made up the earliest Mlle. Swann were, in fact, eliminated from the Gilberte of the present moment, held very far away by the magnetic forces of another universe, centering around a phrase of Bergotte's of which they had come to be an integral part, and saturated with the fragrance of hawthorn blossoms. The fragmentary Gilberte of to-day listened to my request with a smile. Then she looked serious and began to think it over, seeming to be searching for something in her mind. And I was glad of this, for it prevented her from noticing a group not far from us which it assuredly would not have been pleasant for her to see. The Duchesse de Guermantes was there, engaged in lively conversation with a "fright" of an old woman whom I gazed at, utterly unable to guess who she was; I had no idea whatsoever. "How strange to see Rachel here," Bloch whispered to me as he passed at this moment. That magic name instantly broke the spell which had given

to Saint-Loup's mistress the unfamiliar form of that revolting old woman and then I recognised her perfectly. I have already mentioned how in just this way, as soon as I was told the name of someone whose face was unfamiliar to me, the enchantment ceased and I recognised him. There was one man, however, whom I could not recognise even when they told me his name and I thought it must be someone else with the same name, for he bore no sort of resemblance to the man whom I had not only known in former years but had met again more recently. And yet it was he, only whiter and stouter, and he had shaved his moustache and this had sufficed to make him lose his identity. But to come back to Rachel—it was indeed she (now a famous actress and intending to recite some verses of Musset and La Fontaine later on during this reception) who was talking at this moment with Gilberte's aunt, the Duchesse de Guermantes. Now, the sight of Rachel could not possibly be very agreeable to Gilberte and I was still more annoyed both to learn that she was going to recite some poetry and also to note her intimacy with the Duchess. The latter, too long conscious of occupying the foremost social position in Paris (while failing to realise that such a position exists only in the minds of those who believe in it and that many newcomers, if they did not see her anywhere or read her name in the account of any fashionable function, would, in fact, believe that she had no social standing whatsoever) except for formal calls as few and infrequent as possible, no longer visited the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which, she said, "bored her to death," and, on the other hand, indulged her fancy for lunching with this or that actress whom she considered "delicious."

When it came to Balthy and Mistinguett, whom she thought "adorable," the Duchess still hesitated, for fear of a scene with M. de Guermantes, but she frankly adopted Rachel as a friend. The younger generations concluded from this that the Duchesse de Guermantes, despite her name, must be some half-caste who had never been really

high-class. It is true that, in the case of some sovereigns, for whose intimacy two other women of high position were also contending, Mme. de Guermantes still went to the trouble of entertaining them at luncheon. But in the first place, they come seldom, they know some people of no social standing, and the Duchess, through the Guermantes superstitious attachment to the old court ceremonial (for, while well bred people bored her, she set great store by good breeding) made the invitations read, "His Majesty has ordered the Duchesse de Guermantes, . . . has deigned," and so forth. And the newer social strata, ignorant of these formulas, had just so much the lower opinion of the Duchess' standing. As far as the latter was concerned, her intimacy with Rachel might indicate that we had been mistaken when we believed her to be hypocritical and untruthful in condemning high society and when we thought that, in refusing to call on Mme. de Sainte-Euverte, she did so, not so much on account of the latter's lack of intelligence as because she was a social climber, the Duchess calling her "stupid" only because she made it obvious that she was socially ambitious, not yet having reached her goal. But this intimacy with Rachel might also be a proof that the Duchess's intelligence was in reality mediocre, unsatisfied and, late in life when she was tired of fashionable society, eager for vital experiences because of complete ignorance of the true intellectual realities and a touch of the capricious spirit that sometimes leads a woman of high rank to say to herself "What fun it will be!" and then to end her evening in a deadly, tiresome manner, getting up enough energy to go and rouse someone, remain a while by the bedside in her evening wrap and finally, finding nothing to say and noticing that it is very late, go home to bed.

It should be added that a strong antipathy which the versatile Duchess had recently conceived for Gilberte may very well have caused her to take pleasure in admitting Rachel into her circle; besides which, this gave her an opportunity to proclaim one of the Guermantes maxims, to the

effect that the family was too numerous for its members to espouse one another's quarrels (almost too numerous to go into mourning)—an independence of tribal obligations which had been accentuated by the policy it had been necessary to adopt toward M. de Charlus who, if they had followed his lead, would have embroiled them with everybody. As for Rachel, if she really had gone to a great deal of trouble to cultivate relations with the Duchesse de Guermantes (an attitude which the Duchess had not been able to detect under an affectation of disdain and intentionally discourteous acts which made the latter only the more anxious to continue her efforts, enhancing her good opinion of an actress so little disposed to curry favour with those socially above her) that was doubtless due in a general way to the fascination fashionable folk exercise after a certain time on even the most hardened bohemians, parallel to the attraction bohemians have for society folk, an action and reaction that correspond in the sphere of politics to the reciprocal curiosity and desire for an alliance felt by nations that have been at war with one another. But Rachel's friendly inclination may have had a more special reason. It was in Mme. de Guermantes' house, at the hands of Mme. de Guermantes herself, that she had, some years before, suffered her most terrible humiliation. Rachel had gradually not forgotten but forgiven it, but the peculiar prestige it had conferred on the Duchess in her eyes was never to be effaced. The conversation from which I was anxious to divert Gilberte's attention was luckily interrupted, for the lady of the house came for Rachel, whose time to recite had arrived and, leaving the Duchess, she soon appeared on the platform.

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Meanwhile, at the opposite end of Paris, a very different spectacle was taking place. Berma had sent out some invitations to a tea in honour of her daughter and son-in-law. But the guests were in no hurry to arrive. Having learned that Rachel was to recite some poetry at the Princesse de

Guermantes' (which scandalised Berma, a great artist in whose eyes Rachel was still the prostitute who, because Saint-Loup bought her stage gowns, was permitted to have a supernumerary part in plays in which she, Berma, held the principal rôle—and the scandal seemed all the greater because the report had spread through Paris that, while the invitations had gone out in the name of the Princesse de Guermantes, it was really Rachel who was receiving at the Princess's) Berma had written again insistently to some of her special friends not to fail to come to her tea, for she knew them to be also friends of the Princesse de Guermantes, whom they had known as Mme. Verdurin. But the hours passed and no one arrived at Berma's. Bloch, when asked to go there, had answered ingenuously, "No, I'd rather go to the Princesse de Guermantes'." Unfortunately, that was what everyone had decided in his own mind. Berma, afflicted with an incurable disease that allowed her to go out very little socially, had seen her condition grow more serious when, in order to meet the demands of her daughter's luxurious requirements, demands which her son-in-law, in poor health and indolent, could not satisfy, she had gone back to the stage. She knew she was shortening her life but she wished to please her daughter, to whom she brought home large honoraria, and her son-in-law, whom she detested but humoured for, knowing how her daughter adored him, she feared that if she incurred his displeasure, he might, out of spite, prevent her from seeing her child. The latter, while not actually cruel, being secretly loved by the physician attending her mother, had allowed herself to be persuaded that these performances of *Phèdre* were not very dangerous for the sick woman. She had in a way forced the doctor to say so, having retained only that part of his reply and ignored the accompanying objections; he had, in fact, said that he saw no great harm in Berma's giving these performances because he realised that in this way he would please the young woman of whom he was enamoured—perhaps also through ignorance, because he likewise knew

the disease to be incurable anyhow, and it is easy to reconcile ourselves to shortening an invalid's martyrdom when the action that is destined to have this effect is of benefit to us; perhaps also he had the stupid notion that it would please Berma and therefore should do her good, a stupid notion that seemed to him substantiated when, having received a box from Berma's daughter and her husband and having abandoned all his patients for the occasion, he had found the actress as remarkably full of life on the stage as she seemed fatally ill when in her own home. And it is true that our habits make it to a very large extent possible for us and even for our constitutions to adjust to an existence that would seem at first sight to be impossible. Who has not seen an old ring-master, in spite of a weak heart, go through all the acrobatic maneuvers which one would not have believed his heart could stand for one instant? Berma was just as much a veteran of the stage and her system was so perfectly adapted to its exigencies that, by husbanding her strength in a manner imperceptible to the audience, she could give the illusion of good health, impaired only by a purely imaginary nervous ailment. After the scene of the declaration to Hippolyte, although she sensed the terrible night she would have to go through, her admirers applauded with all their might, declaring her more magnificent than ever. She returned home, suffering frightfully but happy to bring her daughter the large bank notes which, as a playful trick of a former chorus girl, she still had the habit of tucking away in her stocking, whence she withdrew them proudly, hoping for a smile or a kiss. Unfortunately, this money merely permitted the son-in-law and daughter to redecorate their residence adjoining hers, to the tune of constant hammering which broke up the sleep of which the great *tragédienne* was in such need. They "did over" each room to follow the changes of fashion or to suit the taste of M. de X or M. de Y, whom they were expecting to entertain. And Berma, realising that the sleep that would have eased her pain had fled, resigned herself to lying awake,

not without a secret scorn for these elegances which were hastening her end and making her last days unbearable. It was doubtless partly for this reason that she scorned them, a natural feeling of resentment against something that is injuring us and which we are powerless to prevent. But it was also because, conscious of the genius within her and having learned at an early age the meaninglessness of all these decrees of fashion, she had, as far as she herself was concerned, remained true to the tradition she had always respected and of which she was the incarnation, which led her to judge things and people as she had done thirty years before—for example, to regard Rachel, not as the fashionable actress she had become but as the little prostitute Berma had once known. Berma, it is true, was no better than her daughter, who had acquired from her by heredity and by the contagion of her example (rendered all the more effective by a very natural admiration) her selfishness, her pitiless sarcasm and her unconscious cruelty. Only Berma had sacrificed all that to her daughter and had thereby purified herself of it. Furthermore, even if her daughter had not had workmen continually in her house, she would still have exhausted her mother, just as the relentless, light-hearted magnetic forces of youth exhaust the old and the sick who wear themselves out trying to keep up the pace. Every day there was some new luncheon engagement and Berma would have been considered selfish to deprive her daughter of it or even not to be present herself, when they had counted on the wonder-working presence of the famous mother to overcome the reluctance of some new acquaintances who had to be coaxed. They offered her as an "attraction" to these same acquaintances for a party outside the home, to shew them some special attention. And the poor mother, seriously engaged in her *tête-à-tête* with death, already in her veins, was obliged to rise early and go out. More than that—since at that time Réjane, in all the splendour of her talent, had given some performances abroad which had met with enormous success, the son-in-law felt that Berma should not let

herself be outshone, was determined that the family should reap the same abundant glory and forced Berma to undertake tours on which she had to be given morphine injections, which might have caused her death on account of the condition of her kidneys. This same drawing power of fashion, social prestige and life had acted like a suction pump on the day of the Princesse de Guermantes' reception and had drawn off, with the force of a pneumatic machine, even the most devoted members of Berma's circle, leaving her house, by contrast and in consequence, absolutely empty and dead. One solitary young man had come, uncertain whether Berma's tea might not also be a brilliant affair. When Berma saw the hour pass and understood that everybody had deserted her, she had tea served and they sat down around the table, but as if to a funeral repast. There was nothing now in Berma's countenance to recall the photograph which, one evening in Mid-Lent, had stirred me so deeply. She had, as the common people say, death in her face. This time she did, indeed, resemble a marble statue of the Erectheum. Her hardened arteries being already half petrified, long, narrow, sculpturesque ribbons of mineral-like rigidity could be discerned traversing her cheeks. Her dying eyes lived relatively by contrast with the horrible ossified mask and shone faintly like a serpent asleep among the rocks. Meanwhile the young man, having sat down at the table out of politeness, was continually looking at the time, feeling drawn toward the brilliant affair at the Guermantes'. Berma did not have a word of reproach for the friends who had deserted her and who naïvely hoped she would not know they had gone to the other reception. She merely muttered, "A woman like Rachel giving an affair at the Princesse de Guermantes'—you have to come to Paris to see a thing like that!" And she ate forbidden cakes in silence and with solemn slowness, as though performing some funeral rite. The tea was all the gloomier because the son-in-law was furious that Rachel, whom he and his wife knew very well, had not invited them. His spleen was only increased

when the young guest said that he had received an invitation and that he knew Rachel so well that, if he left at once for the Guermantes', he could ask her to invite the society-mad young couple even now at the last minute. But Berma's daughter knew too well what a low opinion her mother had of Rachel and that it would break her heart to have her daughter solicit an invitation of the former prostitute. And so she told the young man and her husband that it was out of the question. But she took her revenge while they were at table by sulking over the good time she was missing and indicating that she was vexed at her mother for spoiling her fun. The latter pretended not to notice her daughter's pouting face and from time to time, in a dying voice, addressed an amiable remark to the young man, the only guest who had come. But soon the gale that was sweeping everything toward the Guermantes', and had even carried me there, got the best of him and he rose and took his departure, leaving Phèdre—or death, it was not very clear which it was —to eat the rest of the funeral cakes with her daughter and son-in-law.

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The conversation Gilberte and I were having was interrupted by the sudden sound of Rachel's voice. She had adopted a clever method of presentation, one which implied that the selection she was reciting formed part of a situation which had already been going on and of which we were hearing only a fragment, as though the *artiste,* while walking along a road, had happened for a few moments to come within range of our hearing. Nevertheless, her listeners were amazed to see this woman, before she had uttered a sound, crouch down, bending her knees inward and holding out her arms as if cradling an invisible child in them, and suddenly start to recite some well known verses in a supplicating tone of voice.

The announcement of a poem almost everyone knew had pleased the audience. But when they saw Rachel cast

despairing glances all about her before beginning to recite, lift up her hands in entreaty and utter a moan, as it were, with each word, everyone felt ill at ease and almost shocked at this display of emotion. No one had ever imagined that a poetry recitation could be anything like that. Gradually one gets used to (that is to say, one forgets) the first feeling of embarrassment, one notices the good points and mentally compares different ways of reciting, concluding that this feature is an improvement and that one not so good. In the same way in a simple lawsuit, when one sees a lawyer come forward, raise one arm with his barrister's gown falling from it, and begin in a threatening tone, one hesitates to look at one's neighbours, feeling that it is grotesque but perhaps, after all, it is magnificent and so one waits to be sure. Rachel's audience looked at one another, not knowing what expression to assume; some ill-bred young people smothered a wild desire to laugh; everyone stealthily cast a furtive glance at his neighbour, just as at a fashionable dinner, when you find at your place a strange implement, lobster fork, sugar sifter and so on, the purpose and use of which are unfamiliar, you watch some guest more of an authority on such matters, who you hope will make use of his first and thereby give you an example to imitate. We act in the same manner also when someone quotes a line we do not know but try to pretend we do and so, as a matter of courtesy, like allowing someone else to enter a door first, we let him, as the better informed, have the pleasure of saying who wrote it. In much the same way each one, listening to the actress, waited with lowered head and watchful eye for someone else to take the initiative of laughing or criticising, weeping or applauding. Mme. de Forcheville, who had come back expressly from Guermantes (whence, as we shall see later, the Duchess had been virtually banished) had assumed an air of critical scrutiny, almost of downright disapproval, either to shew that she was a good judge of such matters and was not there merely as a society butterfly, or from hostility toward people less versed in literature who might

have spoken to her of something else, or through concentration of her whole being in an effort to determine whether she liked it—or, perhaps, because she found it interesting but did not fancy, at any rate, the way of reciting certain lines. This attitude, it would seem, ought rather to have been assumed by the Princesse de Guermantes, but since it was in her own house and since, having become as miserly as she was rich, she had decided to give Rachel merely five roses, she led the applause. She stimulated enthusiasm and created favourable sentiment by continually uttering exclamations of delight. In that only was she the Mme. Verdurin of the old days, for she had the air of listening to the poetry for her own pleasure, as though she had wanted someone to come and recite to her all alone and five hundred people had happened to be there and so she had given them permission to come secretly, as it were, and be present while she enjoyed herself. Meanwhile I noticed—but without my pride being flattered, for she had become old and ugly—that Rachel was casting significant glances at me, though somewhat guardedly. During her entire recitation, she let a veiled, penetrating smile flicker in her eyes like bait to attract the favourable response which perhaps she hoped would come from me. In the meantime some old ladies, unaccustomed to poetical recitations, said to a neighbour, "Did you notice that?" alluding to the actress's tragic, solemn pantomime, which they did not know what to think of. The Duchesse de Guermantes sensed the slight wavering and turned the tide of victory by exclaiming, "Splendid!" right in the middle of a poem which perhaps she thought was finished. More than one guest then made a point of endorsing this exclamation with an approving look and a nod, to shew perhaps, not so much their appreciation of the recitation as their relations with the Duchess. When the poem was ended, as we were very near Rachel, I heard her thank Mme. de Guermantes and at the same time, taking advantage of my being at the Duchess's side, she turned toward me with a gracious greeting. I then understood (un-

like the impassioned glances of M. de Vaugoubert's son, which I had interpreted as a greeting from a man who mistook me for someone else) what I had believed to indicate an amorous desire on Rachel's part had been merely a restrained attempt to secure recognition and a greeting from me. I responded with a bow and a smile. "I am sure he does not recognise me," the actress said to the Duchess, with an air of mock humility. "Indeed I do," I replied with emphasis. "I recognised you instantly."

While this woman was reciting the most beautiful lines of La Fontaine with so much assurance and thinking all the while, through kindness, stupidity or embarrassment, only of the difficulty of getting a sign of recognition from me, during the same beautiful lines Bloch had been thinking only of how he might make ready, immediately the recitation should come to an end, to rush forward, like a besieged party attempting a sally, and trampling, if not the bodies at any rate the feet of his neighbours, come up and congratulate the monologuist, either through a mistaken conception of duty or because of a desire to attract attention to himself.

"It was very fine!" he said to Rachel and, having spoken these simple words and gratified his desire, he turned back and made so much noise regaining his seat that Rachel had to wait more than five minutes before reciting the second poem. When she had finished this one, *Les Deux Pigeons*, Mme. de Monrieuval came up to Mme. de Saint-Loup and, knowing her to be well read but forgetting that she had her father's subtle, sarcastic mind, asked, "That's La Fontaine's fable, isn't it?"—thinking she recognised it but not absolutely sure, because she was not familiar with La Fontaine's fables and, besides, thought they were intended for children and not to be recited at social functions. To make such a hit, the good woman thought the actress had doubtless paraphrased some of La Fontaine's fables. And Gilberte, impassive up till then, encouraged her in this opinion without meaning to do so for, disliking Rachel and intending to say

that, with a delivery like hers, there was nothing left of the fables, she said it with the excessive subtlety of shading which used to characterise her father and which always left the naïve listener in doubt as to what he really meant. More modern in general, although Swann's daughter—like a duckling hatched by a hen—she was rather Wordsworthian and contented herself with saying, "I consider it very touching, delightfully sentimental." But in replying to Mme. de Monrieuval, she used this fantastic formula of Swann's which used to mislead people who take everything literally: "One-fourth is the interpreter's own invention, one-fourth is sheer madness, one-fourth makes no sense and the remainder is La Fontaine." This allowed Mme. de Monrieuval to maintain that what one had just heard was not La Fontaine's *Les Deux Pigeons* but an adaptation, of which at most one-fourth was from La Fontaine; this astonished nobody, because of the extraordinary ignorance of that audience.

One of Bloch's friends having arrived late, Bloch had the thrill of asking him if he had ever heard Rachel and then giving him an extraordinary description of her way of reciting, exaggerating the account and suddenly finding in reproducing and interpreting to someone else this modernist style of delivery a peculiar pleasure he had by no means experienced in listening to it. Then, with a forced show of feeling and in a falsetto voice, as though proclaiming her talent, he again congratulated Rachel and presented his friend, who professed unbounded admiration; Rachel, who was now acquainted with ladies of high society and unconsciously imitated them, replied, "I am greatly flattered and honoured by your appreciation." Bloch's friend inquired what she thought of Berma. "Poor woman, it seems she is in desperate want. She had a certain—I won't say talent because it was not at bottom real talent, she liked only the ultra-tragic; but after all, she had her usefulness, no doubt about that; she acted in a rather lifelike manner and, besides, she was good-hearted and generous and ruined herself for others. She has not earned a penny for a long time because

the public doesn't care at all for her style of acting. But," she added with a laugh, "I should explain that I was too young, of course, to see her act except at the very last, when I wasn't old enough to understand." "Then she did not recite poetry very well?" Bloch's friend ventured, to flatter Rachel, who replied, "Good heavens! she never could recite a single line; it was prose, Chinese, Volapuk, anything you like, but not poetry. But I ought to explain that, of course, I heard her very seldom and only toward the last," she added, in order to make herself out younger than she was. "But I have been told she was no better in earlier years, quite the contrary."

I was coming to realise that the passage of time does not necessarily bring about progress in the arts. And just as many an author of the seventeenth century who knew nothing of the French Revolution or the discoveries of science or the World War, may be superior to many a writer of the present day and just as it may even be that Fagon was as great a physician as Du Boulbon—the superiority of his genius making up for the inferiority of his knowledge—so Berma was, as they say, a thousand miles above Rachel and time, by making her stand out so prominently together with Elstir, had consecrated her genius.

It is not at all surprising that Saint-Loup's former mistress should speak disparagingly of Berma. She would have done it when she was young. Even if she would not have done it then, she would have done it now. Let a society woman of the highest intelligence and kindliest disposition become an actress, display great talent in her new occupation and meet with unbroken success, if you are in her company some time after, you will be surprised to hear her use, not her own style of language, but the language of common actresses, their peculiar coarseness toward one another, everything that "thirty years behind the scenes" add to a human being as they roll over him. Rachel merely behaved in the same manner without having come from polite society.

Toward the latter part of her life, Mme. de Guermantes

had felt new interests stirring within her. The social world had nothing more to teach her. That she occupied the foremost place in society was, as we have seen, as obvious to her as is the height of the blue sky above the earth. She did not think she needed to buttress a position she considered impregnable. On the other hand, when she read books and went to the theatre, she felt a desire to follow further this reading and these theatrical representations; just as formerly in the narrow little garden the most select elements of the fashionable world used to gather familiarly to sip orangeade among the perfumed breezes of the evening and the clouds of pollen and keep alive in her the liking for aristocratic society, in similar manner now a different intellectual hunger made her want to know the causes of this or that literary controversy, become acquainted with her favourite authors, meet some actresses. Her weary mind demanded a new sustenance. To gain the acquaintance of authors and actresses, she made advances to women with whom in former years she would not have been willing to exchange calling cards and who exploited their intimacy with the director of this or that revue, in the hope of getting the Duchess to attend. The first actress she invited thought herself the only one in a remarkable *milieu*, which seemed more commonplace to the second when she saw who had preceded her. The Duchess, because on certain evenings she received some members of royalty, thought there had been no change in her social standing; but in reality she, the only "blue blood" of purest stock, born a Guermantes and able to sign "Guermantes—Guermantes," when she did not sign "Duchesse de Guermantes," regarded even by her sisters-in-law as something precious above all else, as a Moses rescued from the waters of the Nile, a Christ escaped into Egypt, a Louis XVII delivered from the Temple, the purest of the pure, now making a social sacrifice doubtless through that hereditary need of intellectual nourishment which had caused the social decline of Mme. de Villeparisis—she had herself become a

Mme. de Villeparisis, at whose house women solicitous of their social standing dreaded meeting certain men and women and whom the younger generation, taking note of the situation as it was without knowing what had gone before, believed to be a Guermantes of an inferior vintage, of a poorer harvest, a *déclassée* Guermantes. In the new circles she frequented, having changed less than she thought she had, she continued to believe that to be easily bored was proof of intellectual superiority, but she expressed it in a rough way that gave her voice a certain harshness. When I mentioned Brichot to her, she said, "He sure has bored me for the past twenty years." And when Mme. de Cambremer said, "Read over again what Schopenhauer says about music," she called our attention to this remark, saying vehemently, "'Read over again' is a gem! No, I declare, that's a bit too strong." At that old d'Albon smiled, recognising one of the forms of the Guermantes wit.

"You can say what you like, that is splendid; it has style and character; it's intelligent. No one ever recited poetry like that," said the Duchess, speaking of Rachel and afraid lest Gilberte run her down. The latter moved away toward another group to avoid a conflict with her aunt who, be it added, made only very commonplace remarks about Rachel. But since even the best writers often cease producing at the approach of old age or, after excessive production, have no more talent, society women can be excused if after a certain time they cease to have any wit. Swann could no longer find in the rigid mind of the Duchesse de Guermantes the suppleness of the young Princesse des Laumes. Late in life, wearied by the slightest effort, Mme. de Guermantes made an enormous number of stupid remarks. It is true that every now and then, and many times in the course of this very reception, she became again the woman I had known and discussed society topics cleverly. But along with that it frequently happened that her sparkling conversation which, with her handsome glance, had for so many years held

intellectual sway over the most eminent men in Paris, still scintillated, but in a vacuum, so to speak. When the moment came to put in a clever remark, she stopped for as many seconds as formerly, seemed to hesitate and then to bring forth something, but the quip she launched amounted to nothing. How few people, however, remarked this; the continuance of the manner made them believe in the survival of the substance, as happens to people who, superstitiously attached to a certain make of pastry, continue to have their *petits fours* sent to them from the same concern without noticing that they have become abominable. Even during the war, the Duchess had shewn signs of this senescence. If someone mentioned the word "culture," her face would light up and she would stop him, smile and ejaculate "KKKKultur," at which the friends would laugh, thinking they saw there the Guermantes wit. And indeed it was the same mould, the same intonation, the same smile which had formerly delighted Bergotte—who, for that matter, had he been alive, would likewise have retained his unfinished sentences, his interjections, his dashes, his epithets, but with nothing to say. Newcomers, however, were astonished and sometimes, if they had not happened on a day when she was amusing and in full possession of her faculties, they would say, "How silly she is!" The Duchess, moreover, took care to reserve her less elegant manners for certain occasions and not to display them before those members of her family who invested her with an aristocratic halo. If in her capacity as patron of the arts she had invited a cabinet minister or a painter to the theatre and he naïvely inquired whether her sister-in-law or her husband was in the audience, the really diffident Duchess would reply cavalierly, with a haughty show of audacity, "I have no idea at all. The moment I leave my house, I no longer know what my relatives are doing. As far as politicians and artists are concerned, I am a widow." In this manner she forestalled for the overzealous *parvenu* the possibility of a rebuke—and for herself

a reprimand—from Mme.* de Marsantes or the Duc de Guermantes.

I mentioned to Mme. de Guermantes that I had met M. de Charlus. She considered him farther "gone" than he really was, for society folk draw distinctions in the matter of intelligence, not only between different people in whom it is practically equal but even in the same person at different periods of his life. And then she added, "He always was the very image of my mother-in-law and now the likeness is even more striking." There was nothing extraordinary about this resemblance. It is a well known fact that some women project themselves, so to speak, into another human being with the utmost accuracy, only making a mistake as to sex. But one cannot say about this error "*felix culpa*," for sex reacts on personality and in a man femininity becomes affectation, reticence, sensitiveness and so on. Whatever one may say, in his face, even if covered with a beard, in his cheeks, bloated though they may be beneath the side-whiskers, there are certain lines that would be found to duplicate his mother's portrait. There is scarcely a single aged Charlus who is not like some old ruin in which, to one's surprise, one can distinguish under the thick layers of fat and rice powder some fragments of a beautiful woman in her eternal youthfulness.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to see you," the Duchess went on. "Goodness! when did I see you last?" "Calling on Mme. d'Agrigente, where I often used to meet you." "Naturally so, my dear fellow, for I went there often, since Basin was in love with her at that time. I was always to be found most frequently at the home of his sweetheart of the moment, because he would say to me, 'Don't fail to go and call on her.' At bottom, it always seemed to me a bit indelicate to send me to make a sort of bread-and-butter call as soon as he had had his fill. I accustomed myself to it rather quickly, but the most annoying thing about it was

* The "M. de Marsantes" of the French text is probably a misprint for the "sister-in-law" just mentioned.—*F.A.B.*

that I had to keep up my connexion after he had broken off his, which always recalled to my mind Victor Hugo's line:

Emporte le bonheur et laisse-moi l'ennui.

Just as in the poem, I went into it nevertheless with a smile, but really it wasn't fair, he should have granted me the right to be inconstant at least toward his mistresses for, accumulating all his unclaimed articles, I finally reached a point where I no longer had an afternoon to myself. Nevertheless, those days seem sweet compared to the present. Good gracious, the fact that he has again taken to being unfaithful only flatters me because it makes me feel younger. And yet I preferred his earlier method. You see, it was too long since he had been untrue to me and he couldn't remember how to go about it. Still, we're not on bad terms, we talk to one another, we're rather fond of one another," the Duchess explained, fearing I might have inferred that they had separated entirely, and then, in the way people say of a very sick person, "But he can still speak very clearly, I read to him for an hour this morning," she added, "I'm going to tell him you're here, he will want to see you." And she went over to the Duke, who was sitting on a sofa with a lady with whom he was engaged in conversation. But seeing his wife coming to speak to him, he put on such an angry look that she had no choice but to withdraw. "He's busy over something or other; we'll see about it later on," she said to me, preferring to let me get out of the situation as best I could. Bloch now came up and asked us, in behalf of his American friend, for the name of a certain young duchess who was there. I replied that she was a niece of M. de Bréauté but Bloch asked an explanation of this name, as it meant nothing to him. "Ah, Bréauté!" exclaimed Mme. de Guermantes, speaking to me. "You remember—good heavens, how far away that all is!" Then, turning to Bloch, "Well then, I'll tell you. He was a snob. They were people who lived near my mother-in-law's. That

wouldn't interest you but it's amusing to my friend here," she explained pointing to me, "as he used to know all those people in the old days, at the same time I did," she added, shewing me by these remarks and in many ways how long a time had gone by. Mme. de Guermantes' friendships and opinions had been renewed so many times since then that she now regarded her charming Babel as a snob. Besides, he was not only far back in the past but—and this was something I had not perceived when, during my first years in society, I had believed him to be one of the essential notables of Paris who would remain forever associated with its social history, as Colbert is with the reign of Louis XIV—he, too, had his stamp of provincialism; he used to be a country neighbour of the old Duchess and it was on that footing that the Princesse des Laumes had come to know him. However, this same Bréauté, stripped of his wit and relegated to such a distant past that he was out-of-date—which proved that he had since then been completely forgotten by the Duchess and in the neighbourhood of Guermantes—constituted a connecting link between the Duchess and myself (something I would never have imagined that first evening at the Opéra-Comique, where he had seemed to me like a sea-god dwelling in his marine grotto) because she remembered that I had known him, therefore that I was a friend of hers and, if not born into her social circle, had at any rate lived in it a much longer time than many of the people about us, and because she remembered this and yet incorrectly enough to have forgotten certain details which had at the time seemed of vital importance, namely, that I did not go to Guermantes in those days and was only a middle-class Combray lad the time she came to Mlle. Percepied's nuptial mass, that, notwithstanding all the entreaties of Saint-Loup, she did not send me an invitation during the year that followed her appearance at the Opéra-Comique. To me this seemed of prime importance, for it was just at that moment that the existence of the Duchesse de Guermantes appeared to me like a Paradise I should never

enter; but to her it was the same humdrum life she always led, and since somewhat later I had dined with her frequently and, morever, even before that time had been a friend of her aunt and her nephew, she could no longer tell at what point our friendship had begun and did not realise what a terrible anachronism she committed in setting the beginning of it several years too early. For, according to that, I would have known the Mme. de Guermantes of the name I then believed impossible to know and I would have been received within the charmed circle of the name of golden syllables, and into the Faubourg Saint-Germain, whereas I had merely gone to dine with a lady who by then meant no more to me than any other and who had sometimes obtained an invitation for me, not to descend into the submarine realm of the Nereids but to spend the evening in her cousin's box at the opera. "If you wish some details concerning Bréauté, who wasn't worth that much trouble," she added, speaking to Bloch, "get them from my friend here, who is worth a hundred of him and who has dined with him at my house dozens of times. Wasn't it at my house you met him? Anyhow, that was where you made Swann's acquaintance." And I was as much surprised that she should think I might have met M. de Bréauté anywhere else than at her house—and therefore had the entrée to that social circle before I knew her—as I was to see that she believed it was at her house that I first met Swann. Less untruthfully than Gilberte when she said of De Bréauté, "He's an old neighbour of mine in the country; I enjoy talking with him about Tansonville," whereas he was not among their friends at Tansonville in the early days, I might have said of Swann, who, as a matter of fact, recalled to my mind anything but the Guermantes, "He was a neighbour of ours in the country who often used to come to call on us in the evening." "I don't know just how to explain it," she went on. "He was a man who had said it all when he talked of Royal Highnesses. He had a collection of rather funny stories about the people of Guermantes, about my mother-in-law and

about Mme. de Varambon before she became a member of the household of the Princesse de Parme. But does anybody to-day know who Mme. de Varambon was? My friend here, yes, he knew all that crowd, but they're all dead and gone; even their names don't exist any longer and, besides, they didn't deserve to be remembered." And notwithstanding the unified whole which society seems to be, in which, in truth, social relationships reach their highest degree of concentration and everything is interrelated, I realised how it still contains some provinces or, at any rate, how Time creates some which change their names and are unintelligible to people who arrive after the configuration has altered. "She was a good soul who used to say things of unparalleled stupidity," the Duchess continued, referring to Mme. de Varambon and, insensible to that poetry of the incomprehensible which is an effect of Time, singling out the humorous element, as was her wont, after the fashion of the Meilhac type of literature and in keeping with the Guermantes wit. "At one time she had a mania for constantly swallowing pills that were prescribed in those days for a cough and were called," she added, laughing herself at a name so distinctive and formerly so well known, but today unknown to the people she was talking to, "Géraudel pills. 'Mme. de Varambon,' my mother-in-law would say to her, 'you will ruin your digestion by swallowing Géraudel pills all the time like that.' 'But my dear Duchess,' Mme. de Varambon replied, 'how could they ruin my digestion when they go into my bronchial tubes?' And then it was she who used to say that the Duchess had a cow which was 'so handsome that it was always taken for a stallion'." And Mme. de Guermantes would gladly have continued to tell anecdotes about Mme. de Varambon, of which we knew hundreds, but we realised that her name did not suggest to Bloch's uninformed memory any of the pictures which came up before our eyes at the mention of Mme. de Varambon, M. de Bréauté, the Prince d'Agrigente, and therefore perhaps it inspired him with a feeling of respect which I

knew to be excessive but which I found quite comprehensible —not, however, because I had myself experienced it, for our own mistakes and absurdities rarely have the effect, even when we have seen through them completely, of making us more indulgent toward similar shortcomings in others.

The past had become so altered in the Duchess's mind, or else the lines of demarcation that existed in mine had always been so entirely lacking in hers, that what had been a noteworthy event for me had passed unnoticed by her and she was able to assume that I had first met Swann at her house and M. de Bréauté elsewhere, thus attributing to me a social past which she carried too far back. For this sense of the passage of time which I had just acquired the Duchess possessed also, but with the opposite illusion to mine, which had been to believe past time shorter than it was, whereas she, on the contrary, exaggerated its duration and made it extend back too far, especially in her failure to take into account that infinite line of demarcation between the period when she was only a name for me (later the object of my love) and the period when she was for me merely a society woman like any other. Now, it was only during the second period that I had gone to her house and by then she had become a different person for me. But these differences escaped her eyes and she would not have thought it strange if it had turned out that I had been at her house two years earlier, since she did not know that at that time she was quite another person in my eyes and since her own personality did not shew to her, as it did to me, any break in continuity.

I told the Duchesse de Guermantes that Bloch had thought it was the former Princesse de Guermantes who was giving the reception and I added, "That recalls the first evening I went to the Princesse de Guermantes', when I believed I had not been invited and would be put out and when you wore a red dress and red shoes." "Good heavens, how far back all of that is!" replied the Duchess, thereby accentuating for me the impression of the passage of time. She gazed into the distance with a melancholy look and yet dwelt

on the red dress with special insistence. I asked her to describe it to me and she did so obligingly. "Such dresses are not worn to-day at all. It was a style of that period." "But weren't they good-looking?" I inquired. She was always afraid of giving the other person an advantage and lowering her own prestige by something she might say. "Yes, indeed. I thought them very pretty. They are not worn now because they are not being made any more. But they will be worn again. All the old styles come back, in dress and music and painting," she added emphatically, thinking there was some originality in this philosophy. However, the sadness of the thought of growing old brought on a look of weariness again, which a smile struggled to overcome. "You are sure they were red shoes? I thought they were gold ones." I assured her that it was most vividly present in my mind, without reminding her of the circumstance which made me so positive about it. "It is very kind of you to remember that," she said, with an air of tenderness, for women call us kind when we remember their beauty, as artists do when we admire their paintings. Moreover, in the case of a strong-minded woman like the Duchess, however remote the past may be, one cannot forget it. "Do you recall," she remarked, as a reward for having remembered her dress and shoes, "how we brought you home, Basin and I? You had a young girl coming to see you after midnight. Basin laughed heartily at the idea that anyone should call on you at that hour." I did, in fact, remember that Albertine had come to see me that evening after the Princesse de Guermantes' soirée; I remembered it as clearly as did the Duchess, even though I was as indifferent to Albertine now as Mme. de Guermantes would have been, had she known that Albertine was the young girl on whose account I could not stop at their house. The truth is that for a long time after love for those who have died has left our hearts, their ashes, now of no further interest to us, continue to be mixed like an alloy with the incidents of the past. And though we love them no longer, it happens that,

when we call to mind a room, a garden path, a road where they were at a certain hour, we are forced, in order to fill the space they occupied, to allude to them, even without longing for them or naming them or allowing anyone to know their identity. (Mme. de Guermantes scarcely identified the young girl who was to come that evening, had never known her name and mentioned her only because of the strangeness of the hour and the circumstance.) Such are the final, unenviable forms that survival assumes.

Although the opinions the Duchess then expressed concerning Rachel were commonplace in themselves, they interested me because of the fact that they, too, marked a new hour on the dial of time. For the Duchess had not forgotten, any more than had Rachel, the evening that the latter had spent at her house, but her recollection of it had undergone at least as great a transformation. "I must admit," she said, "that I am all the more interested in listening to her recite and hearing them applaud her because it was I who discovered her, appreciated her talent, sang her praises, pushed her to the front at a time when she was unknown and everybody was laughing at her. Yes, my dear, it will surprise you to know that mine was the first house in which she was heard in public. Yes, when all the people who claim to be ahead of the times, like my new cousin," she said, indicating sarcastically the Princesse de Guermantes, who for her was still Mme. Verdurin, "would have let her die of hunger without condescending to listen to her, I thought her promising and got her an engagement to come and recite at my house before all the most ultra-fashionable people. I can say, using a rather silly and pretentious expression (for at bottom real talent needs no assistance) that it was I who gave her her start. Of course, she did not need me." I made a slight gesture of protest and saw that Mme. de Guermantes was quite ready to entertain the contrary proposition. "You don't agree with me? You think talent needs a backer? After all, you may be right. It's odd but you say just what Dumas used to tell

me. In that case, I am extremely flattered if I have had some part, however small, not in the talent, obviously, but in the fame of such an artist." Mme. de Guermantes preferred to give up her idea that talent breaks through of itself, like an abscess, because it was then more flattering for her, but also because for some time she had been admitting newcomers to her home and, being tired out besides, had become rather humble, questioning others and asking their opinions in order to form her own. "I don't need to tell you," she went on, "that the intelligent audience known as 'polite society' did not grasp the value of her performance in the least. They protested, they laughed at it. It was of no use for me to tell them it was unique and intriguing, something that had never been done before; they did not believe me, just as they have never believed me about anything. It was the same way with the thing she acted, something by Maeterlinck; now it is well known, but at that time everybody was making fun of it, but for my part, I thought it very fine. I am surprised myself when I think that I, a country-bred woman, who had only such opportunities as village girls get, should have liked those things from the very first. Naturally, I could not have told you why, but they pleased me, they moved me deeply. Why, even Basin, who is not at all quick to sense such things, was struck by the effect it had on me and said to me, 'I don't want you to hear any more of that nonsense, it makes you ill.' And that was true because, although I am taken for a woman without feeling, at bottom I'm a bundle of nerves."

* * *

At this moment an unexpected incident occurred. A footman came and told Rachel that Berma's daughter and son-in-law desired to speak to her. We have seen that Berma's daughter had opposed her husband's desire to have someone ask Rachel for an invitation for them. But after the young man in question had left, the ennui of the young couple in the mother's company increased, the thought of the good

time other people were having tormented them—in fine, taking advantage of a moment when Berma, afflicted with a slight hemorrhage, had retired to her room, they scurried to dress more elegantly, called a taxi and arrived at the Princesse de Guermantes' without having been invited. Rachel, suspecting the situation and secretly flattered, assumed an arrogant air and told the footman she could not be disturbed and that they should write a note explaining the object of their extraordinary procedure. The footman returned with a card on which Berma's daughter had scrawled a note, saying that she and her husband had not been able to resist the desire to hear Rachel and asked her to let them come in. Rachel smiled over the silliness of their pretext and her own triumph, and sent back word that she was extremely sorry but she had finished her recitations. The footmen in the front hall, where the young couple were still waiting, were already beginning to snicker at the plight of the two supplicants refused admittance. The shame of a humiliating rebuff and the thought of how utterly insignificant Rachel was, compared with her mother, drove Berma's daughter to carry through to the end a step she had at first ventured to take only from her need of entertainment. She sent in a request to Rachel as a favour, even if she was not to hear her recite, that she be allowed to shake hands with her. Rachel was engaged in conversation with an Italian prince, who was reported to be fascinated by the charm of her large fortune, the source of which was somewhat glossed over by some social connexions; she saw in a flash the complete reversal of positions which now placed at her feet the children of the illustrious Berma. After narrating the incident to everyone in a humorous manner, she sent word to the young couple to come in, which they did without being asked twice, thereby ruining Berma's social standing at one stroke, as they had wrecked her health. Rachel had grasped this and also the fact that condescending amiability on her part would win her the name of being kind-hearted and give the young couple a reputation for servility more effectively than if she

refused to see them. Consequently, she received them with affected cordiality, exclaiming, with the air of a distinguished benefactor able to lay aside his greatness, "Why certainly! It gives me great pleasure. The Princess will be delighted." Not knowing it was believed at the theatre that it was she who had done the inviting, perhaps she was afraid that if she refused to let Berma's young people come in, they would question, not her goodwill, which would not have mattered to her, but her influence. The Duchesse de Guermantes instinctively moved away, for the more anyone seemed to be trying to get into society, the lower he fell in her estimation. She had no respect at all for anything in the present situation except Rachel's kindliness and would have turned her back on Berma's young folk if someone had introduced them. Meanwhile, Rachel was already composing in her mind the gracious remarks with which she was going to crush Berma in the wings at the theatre—"I was terribly sorry, positively heartbroken, that your daughter had to wait out in the hall. If only I had understood! She sent me in one card after another." She was delighted to deal Berma this blow. She might, perhaps, have recoiled from delivering it, had she known it would be fatal. People like to inflict suffering, but without putting themselves clearly in the wrong by killing their victim. Besides, what had she done that was wrong? As it turned out, she said with a laugh a few days later, "It's going a bit too far! I tried to be kinder to her children than she ever was to me, and now it wouldn't take much for me to be accused of having murdered her. I call the Duchess to witness." It seems as if, with the great actresses, all the mean sentiments and insincerity of theatrical life passed into their children, without the latter having the outlet of persistent work, as in the case of the mother; great actresses are frequently the victims of family conspiracies woven about them, as so often happened in the *dénouement* of the tragedies in which they acted.

Gilberte, as we have seen, had desired to avoid a clash with her aunt over Rachel. She was wise to do so; it was none too easy, at best, to undertake the defence of Odette's daughter in the presence of Mme. de Guermantes, so great was her animosity—and all because the "new way" in which the Duchess had told me her husband was being untrue to her referred to the manner in which the Duke was carrying on a liaison with Mme. de Forcheville, extraordinary as that might appear to anyone knowing Odette's age.

When one thought how old Mme. de Forcheville must be by this time, it did, indeed, seem extraordinary. But perhaps Odette had begun very young her career as a *femme galante*. And then, too, there are some women whom one meets every ten years in a fresh incarnation and with a fresh love affair (sometimes even after one thought them dead) driving to despair a young wife abandoned by her husband.

It should be said that the Duchess's life was undoubtedly very unhappy and for a certain reason which, in another direction, had had the result of leading M. de Guermantes likewise to frequent a social circle of a lower order. Long since sobered down by his advanced age, although still in robust health, he had ceased his conjugal infidelities, when he suddenly became infatuated with Mme. de Forcheville, no one knowing just how this liaison sprang up. But it had assumed such proportions that the old Duke, conducting this last love affair in the same way he had conducted those of former years, isolated his mistress from the world so completely that, while my love for Albertine had repeated, with important variations, Swann's love for Odette, M. de Guermantes' love for the latter recalled mine for Albertine. She was required to lunch and dine with him; he was always at her house; she put on airs over this with friends who, but for her, would never have had any contact with the Duc de Guermantes and who came there to meet him, more or less as people go to call on a courtesan in order to meet a sovereign who is her lover. It is true that Mme. de Forche-

ville had long before been admitted to good society. But, becoming a kept woman once more late in life and her lover being such a proud old man who, just the same, was the important personage in her house, she became quite insignificant herself, endeavouring merely to have wrappers he would like and meals he would enjoy and to flatter her friends by telling them she had spoken of them to him, just as she used to tell my great-uncle that she had mentioned him to the Grand Duke, who sent him some cigarettes—in a word, despite all the polish her social position had given her, she was tending, by force of new circumstances, to become again what she had appeared to my childish eyes—"the lady in pink." My uncle Adolphe, to be sure, had been dead many years. But does the substitution of other persons about us in place of the old ones prevent our taking up the old life again? It was doubtless partly through avarice that she had adapted herself to the new circumstances, but also because, rather sought after by society folk while she had a marriageable daughter, she had been dropped as soon as Gilberte married Saint-Loup and she felt that the Duc de Guermantes, who was ready to do anything for her, would attract to her home a number of duchesses, who might be glad to do a mean turn to their friend Oriane, and perhaps finally she came to enjoy the situation because of the displeasure of the Duchess, whom a feminine spirit of rivalry made her glad to triumph over. Some very exclusive nephews of the Duc de Guermantes, the Courvoisiers, also Mme. de Marsantes and the Princesse de Trania went to Mme. de Forcheville's in the hope of being remembered in the Duke's will, without concerning themselves about the annoyance which that might cause Mme. de Guermantes, whom Odette, stung by her sovereign contempt, spoke ill of on every possible occasion. This liaison with Mme. de Forcheville, which was merely an imitation of his earlier ones, had just caused the Duc de Guermantes to lose for the second time a chance to be elected president of the Jockey Club and also a member-at-large in the Académie des Beaux-Arts,

just as M. de Charlus' publicly known association with M. Jupien had cost him the presidency of the Union Club and also of the Société des Amis du Vieux Paris. Thus the two brothers, so different in their tastes, had both lowered their social prestige as a result of the same indolence, the same lack of will power, which had been noticeable, although agreeably so, in the Duc de Guermantes, their grandfather, a member of the Académie Française, but which had allowed a natural inclination in one of his grandsons and, in the other, what is regarded as an unnatural vice to injure their social standing.

The old Duke did not go out into society any more since he spent his days and evenings at Odette's. But this day, since she had gone to the Princesse de Guermantes' reception, he had come for a moment to see her, in spite of the annoyance of meeting his wife. I no doubt would not have recognised him if the Duchess had not clearly indicated him to me by going over toward him. He was now only a ruin, but a majestic one and something finer than a ruin, that beautifully romantic thing, a rock in the midst of a storm. Lashed on every side by the waves of suffering, by anger at having to suffer, by the rising tide of the sea which surrounded it on all sides, his face, looking like a crumbling block of stone, still retained the distinction and the proud carriage I had always admired; it was worn away, like one of those handsome antique heads, badly damaged, but a welcome adornment in one's study. It looked merely as if it had belonged to an earlier age, not only because of the rough and uneven surface of its formerly smooth and polished material but also because the former expression of shrewdness and good humour had given way to an involuntary and unconscious expression, induced by illness, of struggle against death, of resistance, of difficulty in keeping alive. The arteries, having lost all their elasticity, had given a statuesque hardness to his formerly genial countenance. And without his being aware of it, certain aspects of the back of his neck, his cheeks and his forehead suggested a human being clinging

frantically to each minute and hurried along in a tragic whirlwind, while the whitened locks of his thinned-out hair came and buffeted with their foam the storm-beaten promontory of his face. And like those strange, unusual lights which only the approach of a storm that is going to engulf everything casts over the rocks, till then of a different colour, so I realised that the leaden hue of his rigid, worn cheeks, the almost white, wavy gray of his disordered locks, the dim light still lingering in his enfeebled eyes, were tints, not unreal—on the contrary, only too real—but fantastic and borrowed from the palette of the light cast by old age and approaching death, a light inimitable in its terrifying and prophetic shadows.—The Duke remained only a few minutes, but long enough for me to see that Odette, engrossed with younger suitors, flouted him. And strangely enough, he who used to be almost comical when he assumed the bearing of the kings of the tragic stage, now had a truly imposing air, somewhat like his brother, whom he had come to resemble as old age relieved him of all superfluity. And once proud, like his brother, but not in the same way, he now seemed almost deferential, although here also in a different manner. For he had not undergone the same decadence as M. de Charlus, who was reduced to greeting, with the politeness of a forgetful invalid, folk whom he once would have scorned; but the Duke was very old and when he started to go out the door and down the staircase on his way home, old age —which is, after all, the most wretched condition for men and hurls them from their high estate most nearly like the kings of Greek tragedy—old age, forcing him to stop on the *via crucis* that life comes to be for feeble persons threatened with death, and wipe his moist brow, groping about and peering to discover a step he could not find because he had need of a guide for his uncertain feet and beclouded eyes, old age gave him, without his being conscious of it, the air of gently and timidly entreating aid of others and thereby made him more than impressive, appealing.

Thus, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain those three appar-

ently impregnable positions of the Duc and Duchesse de Guermantes and the Baron de Charlus had lost their inviolability, just as all things in this world change through the action of an inner principle no one had given a thought to—in M. de Charlus, his love for Charlie, which had made him a slave of the Verdurins and then induced his senility; in Mme. de Guermantes, a love of novelty and art; in M. de Guermantes, a despotic love like others he had experienced in his life but which the feebleness of old age made still more tyrannical, a love whose weaknesses were no longer controverted and socially atoned for by the austerity of the Duchess's salon, where the Duke no longer appeared and which, for that matter, had virtually ceased to function. Thus does the form of the things of this world change; thus the center of empires, the cadastre of private fortunes and the chart of social positions, all that seemed definitively fixed, is being continually made over and the eyes of a man can during a lifetime contemplate the most complete change in the very quarters where it had seemed to him the most impossible.

Unable to get along without Odette, all the time installed at her house in the same armchair, from which old age and gout made it difficult for him to rise, M. de Guermantes allowed her to receive her friends, who were only too happy to be presented to the Duke, let him do all the talking and listen to his tales of the social life of former times, of the Marquise de Villeparisis, of the Duc de Chartres.

There were times when, looked down upon by the old paintings brought together by Swann in a collector's arrangement which put the finishing touch to the oldfashioned character of the scene, with its Duke so reminiscent of the Restoration, and its courtesan so suggestive of the Second Empire, wearing one of the wrappers he liked, "the lady in pink" would interrupt him with an outburst of chatter and he would stop short and glare ferociously at her. Possibly he had noticed that, like the Duchess, she also sometimes made foolish remarks; or perhaps, in an old man's

hallucination, he thought it was some inopportune witty comment by Mme. de Guermantes that had cut him short, and he believed he was back at the Guermantes residence, like those caged beasts which imagine for a moment that they are once more free in the deserts of Africa. Looking up sharply with his little yellow eyes, which gleamed like a wild animal's, he would fix on her one of those looks that sometimes, when Mme. de Guermantes talked too much, used to make me tremble. In that way would the Duke gaze for a while at the audacious "lady in pink." But she would stand her ground, looking him squarely in the eye, and after a moment, which seemed long to those looking on, the old lion, cowed, remembering that he was not at the Duchess's and free, in that Sahara the entrance to which was marked by the door-mat on the landing, but at Mme. de Forcheville's, in a cage of the Zoological Garden, would draw in his head between his shoulders, with its still abundant mane, blond or white, one could not tell which, and take up his story again. He appeared not to have understood what Mme. de Forcheville wanted to say, which, for that matter, did not generally have much sense. He allowed her to have some friends come to dine with him but, through a whimsical caprice borrowed from his earlier love affairs, which could not have greatly surprised Odette, accustomed as she was to the same from Swann, and which struck a sympathetic chord in me by recalling my life with Albertine, he stipulated that these people should withdraw in good season, so that he might be the last to say good-night to Odette. Needless to say, he had scarcely left when she would go and join other friends. But the Duke did not suspect this—or preferred to appear not to; the sight of old men grows weaker, just as likewise they become hard of hearing, their keenness of observation is dulled, weariness even causes them to relax their vigilance. And there comes a certain age when Jupiter inevitably changes into a character of Molière—not even into the Olympian lover of Alcmène but into a ludicrous Géronte. Furthermore, when Odette was untrue to the Duke

—and also when she cared for his wants—it was with neither charm nor dignity. She was mediocre in this rôle as in all the others. Not that life had not frequently assigned her fine parts but she had not known how to play them. And now she was acting the rôle of recluse. As a matter of fact, every time thereafter that I endeavoured to meet her somewhere, I failed to do so, for M. de Guermantes, wishing to adjust the requirements of hygiene to the exigencies of his jealousy, permitted her only daytime affairs and, at that, no dancing parties. For various reasons she admitted to me frankly this seclusion in which she was held. The principal reason was that, although I had written only some articles and published nothing but some sketches, she fancied I was a well known author, which led her to say naïvely, recalling the days when I used to go to the Avenue des Acacias to see her pass by, and later to her house, "Ah, if I had only foreseen that that young fellow would one day be a great writer!" And so, having heard say that writers like to be in women's company in order to obtain first-hand material and get them to tell the story of their love affairs, she now became a plain prostitute again with me in order to attract my interest. "Why, once there was a man who was crazy about me and I loved him madly, too. We led a heavenly existence. He had to make a trip to America and I was to go with him. The night before our departure I decided it was more beautiful not to risk the decline of a love which could not always remain so fine. We had a last evening, when he believed I was leaving with him; it was a mad night, in his arms I experienced infinite joy, together with the despair of realising that I would never see him again. The next morning I went and gave my ticket to a traveller whom I did not know. He wished at least to pay me something for it. I replied, 'No, you are doing me such a favour by taking it off my hands that I do not wish any money'." Then came another story. "One day I was in the Champs-Elysées. M. de Bréauté, whom I had never seen but once, began to stare at me with such insistence that

I stopped and asked him why he took the liberty of looking at me in that way. He answered, 'I am staring at you because you're wearing a ridiculous hat.' That was true. It was a small hat with pansies on it; the styles of that day were frightful. But I was furious and said to him, 'I will not allow you to talk to me in that manner.' It came on to rain. I said to him, 'I would pardon you only if you had a carriage.' 'Very good! it so happens that I have one and I will see you home.' 'No, I am quite willing to accept your carriage but not your company.' I entered the carriage and he went off in the rain. But that evening he arrived at my house. We had two years of mad love." She went on again, "Come and have tea with me some day and I'll tell you all about how I came to meet M. de Forcheville. After all," she added, with a melancholy air, "I have spent my life as cloistered as a nun because my real lovers have all been men who were terribly jealous of me. I'm not talking of M. de Forcheville, for at bottom he was of only average ability and I have never been able really to love any but intelligent men. But let me tell you, M. Swann used to be just as jealous as the poor Duke is now. I deny myself everything because I know he is not happy at home. In M. Swann's case it was because I loved him madly, and I maintain one surely can give up dancing, going out and all the rest if that will please, or merely avoid causing anxiety to, the man one loves. Poor Charles! he was so intelligent, so fascinating, just the sort of man I love." And possibly that was true. There had been a period when she liked Swann, precisely the period when she was "not his kind." To tell the truth, she never was "his kind" even later on. And yet he loved her at that time very deeply and greatly to his sorrow. Later he was surprised at this contradiction; but there is no contradiction in it if we stop to think what a great amount of suffering is caused in men's lives by women who were "not their kind." That may be due to many causes: in the first place, since they are not our kind, we let ourselves be loved at first without loving

in return and in that way we allow a habit to get a grip on our life which would not have been the case with a woman of our kind, who, feeling herself desired, would have set up a resistance, granted only an occasional rendezvous and not become so intimately connected with every hour of our life that if, later, love is aroused and then the beloved one happens to go away, either because of a quarrel or on a journey when she leaves us without news, not merely one tie is sundered but a thousand. In the second place, the hold they get on our affections is only a sentimental one, because it is not based on deep physical desire and, even if love develops, the mind works still more—instead of a need, we have a romance. We feel no distrust of women who are not our kind; we let them love us and if we then come to love them, we love them a hundred times more than the others but without experiencing with them the contentment of satisfied desire. For these and many other reasons, the fact that our greatest sorrows come to us through women who are not our kind is not due solely to the mockery of fate which realises our happiness only in the form that brings us the least pleasure. A woman who is our kind is seldom dangerous because she desires nothing from us, satisfies and leaves us quickly, does not install herself in our life; and what is dangerous and productive of suffering in love is not the woman herself, it is her daily presence, our curiosity to know what she is doing at every instant—not the woman, but our habit of her. I lowered myself so far as to remark that what she had said of Swann was very fine and noble on her part; but I knew how untrue it was and that her candour was blended with falsehood. While she was telling me of her adventures, I thought with consternation of all that Swann had been unconscious of, and how much suffering it would have caused him because he had fixed his highly sensitised affection on this creature and was able to divine unerringly, just from the look in her eyes, when she espied an unknown man or woman who pleased her. At bottom, she told me all this solely to give me, as she thought, mate-

rial for novels. In this she was mistaken—not that she had not from the beginning abundantly stocked my imagination, but in a much more unintentional manner and through an initiative emanating from me which, without her knowing it, induced from her own self the laws of her life.

M. de Guermantes reserved his fulminations exclusively for the Duchess, whose free and easy associations Mme. de Forcheville took good care to call to his irritated attention. In consequence, the Duchess was very unhappy. It is true that M. de Charlus, to whom I once mentioned this situation, maintained that his brother had not been the first one to blame, that the legend of the Duchess's chastity was actually made up of an incalculable number of cleverly dissembled adventures. I had never heard of this before. To almost everyone, Mme. de Guermantes was a very different type of woman. The idea that her conduct had always been irreproachable was universally accepted. I was unable to determine which of these conceptions of her character was in accord with the truth—that truth which three-fourths of the people nearly always miss. I did, indeed, remember certain roving glances of the Duchess's blue eyes in the nave at Combray but, in truth, they did not conflict with either hypothesis and might be interpreted one way or the other with equal acceptability. For a moment, in my childish infatuation, I had taken them for loving glances intended for me. Then later I had come to understand that they were the kindly glances bestowed on her vassals by a sovereign like the one in the stained-glass windows of the church. Should I now believe that my first idea had been the right one and that, if the Duchess never thereafter spoke to me of love, this was only because she was more afraid of compromising herself with a friend of her aunt and her nephew than with an unknown lad encountered by chance at Saint-Hilaire de Combray?

* * *

The Duchess may for a moment have been glad to feel her past more substantial because shared by me, but upon my

questioning her further concerning the provincialism of M. de Bréauté, whom in those early days I scarcely distinguished from M. de Sagan or M. de Guermantes, she again assumed her society-woman attitude, that is to say, contemptuous of fashionable doings. While conversing with me, she shewed me about the mansion. In the smaller drawing-rooms were some more intimate friends who had preferred to get off by themselves in order to be able to listen to the music better. In a little Empire drawing-room, where a few black figures in frock coats were seated on sofas listening to the concert, we saw beside a Psyche supported by a Minerva, a *chaise longue* which was placed in rectilinear fashion, but concave in the center like a cradle, and on which a young woman was reclining. The languorousness of her pose, which she did not alter even upon the Duchess's entrance, contrasted with the marvellous brilliance of her Empire gown of a scarlet velvet, beside which the reddest fuchsias would have paled and on which figures and flowers seemed to have been pressed so long that they had left their imprint in the shimmering material. In salutation of the Duchess, she inclined slightly her beautiful brown head. Although it was broad daylight, as she had asked to have the window curtains drawn so as to be better able to concentrate her attention on the music, someone, in order that people might not turn their ankles, had lighted an urn on a tripod, which cast a feeble, iridescent glow. In reply to a question from me, the Duchesse de Guermantes told me it was Mme. de Saint-Euverte. I was then curious to know what relation she was to the Mme. de Saint-Euverte I had been acquainted with. Mme. de Guermantes said she was the wife of one of the latter's grandnephews, and seemed inclined to believe she was born a La Rochefoucauld, but denied that she herself had ever known any Saint-Euvertes. I reminded her of the soirée I knew of only by hearsay, it is true, at which, as the Princesse des Laumes, she had met Swann again. Mme. de Guermantes was positive she had not attended that soirée. The Duchess had always been something of a prevaricator

and had become still more so. Mme. de Saint-Euverte represented to her a salon—now somewhat deteriorated with the years, by the way—which she liked to repudiate. I did not press the point. "No, someone you may have seen now and then at my house, because he certainly was witty, was the husband of the woman you are speaking of, but I never had anything to do with the wife." "But there was no husband." "You imagined so because they were separated, but he was far more agreeable than she." It finally dawned upon me that a certain huge, white-haired man, very tall and stout, whom I used to meet pretty much everywhere but whose name I had never known, was Mme. de Saint-Euverte's husband. He had died the year before. As for the niece, I do not know whether it was on account of some digestive or nervous trouble or a phlebitis or a confinement—approaching, recent or miscarried—that she was listening to the music recumbent and not stirring for anyone. The likeliest explanation is that, proud of her beautiful red velvet, she thought she produced a sort of Récamier effect on her *chaise longue*. Little did she realise that she was adding for me a fresh chapter to that name Saint-Euverte which, after such a long interval, marked the extent and continuity of Time. It was Time that she was rocking in that cradle where the name of Saint-Euverte and the Empire style burst into a bloom of fuchsia-red velvet. Mme. de Guermantes declared she had always detested that Empire style; which meant that she detested it now, and that was true, for she always followed the style, although somewhat late. Without complicating matters by talking about David, whom she knew little about, she had, even as a very young girl, considered M. Ingres the most tiresome of "old wheezes"—and then suddenly as the most enjoyable of the masters of *l'art nouveau*, carrying this even so far as to detest Delacroix. By what stages she had swung back from this worship to disapproval is of little importance, since those are delicate gradations of taste which the art critic reflects ten years in advance of the conversation of the more intelligent women.

After having expressed her unfavourable opinion of the Empire style, she apologised for talking to me about people as insignificant as the Saint-Euvertes and silly things like the provincial side to Bréauté's character, for she was as far from imagining why that interested me as Mme. de Saint-Euverte de La Rochefoucauld, seeking the welfare of her stomach or an Ingres-like effect, was from suspecting that her name had fascinated me—her husband's name (not her parents' more illustrious one) which seemed in my eyes to be a function assigned to her to rock the cradle of Time in that so appropriate setting. "But why am I talking to you about such nonsense and how can it possibly interest you?" exclaimed the Duchess. She made this remark in a low voice and no one heard what she said. But a young man (who, as it turned out later on, aroused my interest because of a name that was formerly much more familiar to me than that of Saint-Euverte) rose with an exasperated air and moved away in order to listen to the music without distraction. For it was the *Kreutzer Sonata* they were playing but, having misunderstood the program, he thought it was a piece by Ravel which he had been told was as beautiful as Palestrina's work but difficult to understand. In his impulsive haste to change his seat, he struck against a small writing desk on account of the semi-darkness and this caused a number of people to turn around, glad to have this simple exercise of looking behind them interrupt for a moment the ordeal of listening "religiously" to the *Kreutzer Sonata.* And Mme. de Guermantes and I, the cause of this little scandal, hastened to move on to another room. "Yes, how can such trifles interest a man of your ability? In the same way, a little while ago, I saw you talking with Gilberte de Saint-Loup. It's not worthy of you. That woman means exactly nothing to me; she isn't even a woman; she's the most artificial, middle-class thing I know"—for, even in her championing of what was up-to-date, the Duchess retained her aristocratic prejudices. "And what's more, ought you to come to houses like this? As for to-day's affair, I can

understand it because there was the recitation by Rachel—that might be of interest to you. But fine as she was, she doesn't do herself justice before this crowd. I will have you lunch alone with her and then you'll see what a splendid creature she is. Let me tell you, she is a hundred times finer than anybody here. And after the luncheon she will recite some Verlaine to you. I know you will be enthusiastic over it." She specially boasted to me of her afternoon gatherings, at which she said one would always find X and Y. For she had come to such a conception of the woman with a "salon"—whom she used to look down on with contempt, although now she denied it—that in her eyes the chief point of superiority, the mark of election, was to have "all the men" at one's house. When I mentioned to her that a certain fashionable woman with a "salon" of her own spoke ill of Mme. Howland, the Duchess burst into a laugh over my *naïveté,* exclaiming, "Naturally, since Mme. Howland had all the men at her salon and the other woman was trying to draw them away." "But why you should come to great, big affairs like this," she went on, "is beyond my comprehension—unless it is to make some studies," she added, with an air of doubt and distrust, for she did not dare to venture too far, not knowing very clearly of what the type of improbable operation to which she was alluding consisted.

"Don't you think," I asked the Duchess, "that it must be painful for Mme. de Saint-Loup to listen to her husband's former mistress as she did a little while ago?" I saw fall obliquely across Mme. de Guermantes' face that shadow which seems like a chain of deep reflexions connecting something we have just heard with unpleasant thoughts—unexpressed reflexions, it is true, but not all the serious things we say receive a reply, oral or written. Only a fool sends two vain entreaties in succession for a reply to a letter which was a blunder and which it was a mistake to write, for such letters are answered only with deeds; and the correspondent we believed to be unpunctual says "Monsieur" when she meets us, instead of calling us by our first name. My

allusion to Saint-Loup's liaison with Rachel had nothing so grave about it and could not have displeased Mme. de Guermantes for more than a second by recalling to her that I had been Robert's friend and possibly his confidant regarding the humiliation Rachel had suffered at her soirée at the Duchess's. But she did not follow her reflexions any further, the threatening shadow faded away and she remarked, in reply to my question concerning Mme. de Saint-Loup, "I must admit I think it is a matter of indifference to her, especially as she never loved her husband. She's a dreadful little piece. She liked the social prestige, the name, her position as my niece, the opportunity to climb out of the mire—after which her only thought was how to get down into it again. I confess I felt very badly about this on poor Robert's account for, although he wasn't terribly keen, he was aware of it all and of a lot of other things besides. This mustn't be repeated because, after all, she's my niece—I haven't absolute proof that she was untrue to him but there have been a lot of stories going around. But what if I tell you that I know it for a fact that Robert wanted to fight a duel with an officer from Méséglise? It was because of all this that Robert went and enlisted. The war seemed to him a way of escape from his domestic troubles and, if you want to know what I think, he wasn't killed, he met his death intentionally. She didn't shew any grief at all; she even astounded me with her remarkable cynicism in affecting indifference, which pained me greatly, for I loved poor Robert deeply. Perhaps it will surprise you, because people don't really understand me, but even now I still think of him occasionally. I never forget anyone. He never said a word to me about it, but he understood that I guessed everything. Why, if she had loved her husband the least little bit, could she take it so coolly to be in the same drawing-room with the woman whose infatuated lover he was for so many years—to the very last, one might say, for I am convinced that it was never broken off, not even during the war? Why! she would jump at the woman's throat," exclaimed the Duchess,

forgetting that she had acted cruelly in having Rachel invited and thereby making possible the scene which she considered would have been inevitable, had Gilberte loved Robert. "No, let me tell you, she's a dirty little slut." Such an expression was rendered possible for Mme. de Guermantes, owing to the pleasant incline she was descending from the Guermantes social circle to the company of common actresses and also because she coupled all that with an eighteenth-century manner which she considered full of vigour; and, lastly, because she thought she could do anything she pleased. But this expression was also prompted by the hatred she felt for Gilberte and a need of attacking her, if not actually, at least in effigy. At the same time the Duchess thought she was thereby justifying all her behaviour toward—or, rather, against—Gilberte in society, in the family circle, even with reference to Robert's property and his estate. But sometimes the opinions we form receive unexpected confirmation from facts we were ignorant of and could not have surmised. Gilberte, who had doubtless inherited some of her mother's traits (and it was just this laxity of standards which I had instinctively counted on in asking her to introduce me to some very young girls) after thinking over the request I had made, no doubt in order to keep the benefits within the family, reached a more daring conclusion than any I had been able to imagine; coming up to me again, she said, "If you permit, I'm going to get my daughter and introduce her to you. She's over there, talking with young Mortemart and other uninteresting youngsters. I'm sure she would be a nice little friend for you." I asked her if Robert had been glad to have a daughter. "Oh, he was tremendously proud of her. But naturally, considering his tastes," Gilberte added naïvely, "I think he would have preferred a son." This daughter, whose name and fortune might have given the mother ground to hope that she would marry a royal prince and thereby crown the entire upward effort of Swann and his wife, later chose as husband an obscure literary man, for she had no

snobbishness, and thereby brought the family below the level from which she had started. It was then extremely difficult to convince the younger generations that the parents of this modest couple had enjoyed high social rank.

The surprise and pleasure caused me by Gilberte's remarks quickly gave way, as she went off toward another drawing-room, to the idea of past Time which Mlle. de Saint-Loup also, in her own way, conveyed to me even before I had seen her. Like most persons, moreover, did she not resemble the star-like crossroads in a forest where paths leading from the most different points converge, also for our life? Many were the paths of my life which met in Mlle. de Saint-Loup and radiated outward from her. First of all, there came to an end in her the two principal "ways" where I had taken so many walks and dreamed so many dreams—through her father, Robert de Saint-Loup, the Guermantes way; through Gilberte, her mother, the Méséglise way, which was Swann's way. One of them, through the young girl's mother and the Champs-Elysées, led me to Swann, to my evenings at Combray, to the Méséglise way; the other, through her father, to my afternoons at Balbec, where I saw him again beside the sun-lit sea. And straightway cross-roads between these two main roads defined themselves. For this very real Balbec where I had met Saint-Loup—it was largely on account of what Swann had told me about the churches, especially about the Persian church, that I had so much wanted to go there; and on the other hand, through Robert de Saint-Loup, nephew of the Duchesse de Guermantes, I came out on the Guermantes way again at Combray. But Mlle. de Saint-Loup led to many other points of my life besides—to "the lady in pink," for example, who was her grandmother and whom I had seen at my great-uncle's. A fresh crossroad here, because the great-uncle's valet, who opened the door to me that day and who later, through the gift of a photograph, made it possible for me to identify "the lady in pink," was the uncle * of the young

* In earlier volumes in this series, it is his father.—*F.A.B.*

man who had been loved, not only by M. de Charlus but also by the same father of Mlle. de Saint-Loup, who had thereby made her mother unhappy. And was it not Mlle. de Saint-Loup's grandfather, Swann, who had been the first to mention to me Vinteuil's music, just as Gilberte had been the first to speak to me of Albertine? Now, it was while talking with Albertine about Vinteuil's music that I had discovered who was her closest girl friend and had begun that life with her which had led to her death and had brought me so much sorrow. Moreover, it was also Mlle. de Saint-Loup's father who had gone to try to get Albertine to come back to me. And there even passed before my eyes again my entire society life, both in Paris, in the Swann and the Guermantes salons, and, quite at the other extreme, at Balbec, at the Verdurins'—which thus brought up alongside the two Combray "ways" the Champs-Élysées and the beautiful terrace of La Raspelière. Moreover, whom have we known whose friendship with us we can recount without being necessarily obliged to place him in all the most widely different settings of our existence? A life of Saint-Loup painted by me would extend through all the various scenes of my own life and involve my entire existence, even those portions of it to which he was a stranger, such as my grandmother and Albertine. Furthermore, however far apart they were, the Verdurins were connected with Odette through the latter's past, with Robert de Saint-Loup through Charlie, and in their house, what a rôle Vinteuil's music had played! Finally, Swann had been in love with the sister of Legrandin, who had known M. de Charlus, whose ward young Cambremer had married. Assuredly, if it is only a question of our hearts, the poet was right in speaking of the mysterious threads that life breaks. But it is even more true that life is ceaselessly weaving other threads between human beings and events, that life crosses these threads with one another and doubles them to make the weft heavier, so that, between the tiniest point in our past life and all the other points, a rich network of memories leaves us only the

choice of which road to take. One could say that there was not—if I endeavoured not to use it unthinkingly but to remember what it had been—a single one of the things I was using at that time which had not been a living thing, living in a personal relationship to me, and later transformed for my use into simple industrial material. And my introduction to Mlle. de Saint-Loup was going to take place in the home of Mme. Verdurin, now become the Princesse de Guermantes! With what charm I thought over all my journeys with Albertine, whose successor I was going to ask Mlle. de Saint-Loup to be—in the little tram, near Douville on the way to Mme. Verdurin's, that same Mme. Verdurin who, before I loved Albertine, had brought about and then broken off the love between the grandfather and grandmother of Mlle. de Saint-Loup. All about us were paintings by the Elstir who had introduced me to Albertine. And, the better to fuse together all the past periods of my life, Mme. Verdurin, like Gilberte, had married a Guermantes.

We could not recount our relations even with someone we have known only slightly without bringing in, one after the other, the most diverse settings of our life. Thus, every individual—and I was myself one of these individuals—measured the duration of time for me by the revolution he had accomplished, not only on his own axis, but about other individuals and notably by the successive positions he had occupied with relation to myself.

And in truth, all these different planes on which Time, since I had come to grasp its meaning again at this reception, was arranging the different periods of my life, thereby bringing me to realise that in a book which aimed to recount a human life one would have to use, in contrast to the "plane" psychology ordinarily employed, a sort of three-dimensional, "solid" psychology, added a fresh beauty to the resurrections of the past which my memory had evoked as I sat musing alone in the library, because memory, by bringing the past into the present unmodified, just as it appeared

when it was itself the present, eliminates precisely that great dimension of Time which governs the fullest realisation of our lives.

I saw Gilberte coming toward me. I, for whom Saint-Loup's marriage and the thoughts that filled my mind at that time and which had that very day come back to me unchanged were as of yesterday, was astonished to see beside her a young girl about sixteen years old, whose tall figure was like a measure of the long lapse of years I had endeavoured to ignore.

Time, colourless and impalpable, had, in order that I might, as it were, see and touch it, physically embodied itself in her and had moulded her like a work of art, while at the same time on me, alas, it had merely done its work! And now Mlle. de Saint-Loup stood before me. She had deep-set, clear-cut, profoundly searching eyes. I was struck with the way in which her nose, modelled on her mother's and her grandmother's, ended sharply at a perfectly horizontal line below it, exquisite albeit not short enough. A single feature as distinctive, even had one seen nothing else, would have made it possible to identify one statue among thousands, and I marvelled how nature had come back in the nick of time for the granddaughter, as she had for the mother and grandmother, to give the mighty, deciding stroke of the chisel, like some great and unique sculptor. That charming nose, slightly prominent like a bird's beak, had the curve, not of Swann's but of Saint-Loup's. The soul of that Guermantes was gone, but the charming head of the departed bird, with its piercing eyes, had come and taken its place on the shoulders of Mlle. de Saint-Loup, to plunge her father's friends into dreamy musings. I thought her very beautiful, still full of promise. Laughing, fashioned of the very years I had lost, she seemed to me like my own youth.

And lastly, this idea of time had a final value for me; it was like a goad, reminding me that it was time to begin if I wished to achieve what I had occasionally in the course of my life sensed in brief flashes, along the Guermantes way or

while driving with Mme. de Villeparisis, and which had encouraged me to regard life as worth living. How much more so it appeared to me now that I felt it possible to shed light on this life which we live in darkness and to bring back to its former true character this life which we distort unceasingly—in short, extract the real essence of life in a book. Happy the man who could write such a book, I thought to myself; what a mighty task before him! To convey an idea of it, one would have to go to the noblest and most varied arts for comparisons; for this writer, who, moreover, would have to shew the most contradictory sides of each of his characters in order to give his volume the effect of a solid, would need to prepare it with minute care, constantly regrouping his forces as if for an attack, endure it like an exhausting task, accept it like a rule of conduct, build it like a church, follow it like a regimen, overcome it like an obstacle, win it like a friendship, feed it intensively like a child, create it like a world, without overlooking those mysteries whose explanation is probably to be found only in other worlds and the presentiment of which is the quality in life and art which moves us most deeply. And in those great books there are certain portions which there has been time only to sketch in and which no doubt will never be completed because of the very magnitude of the architect's plan. How many great cathedrals remain unfinished! Such a book one nourishes over a long period of time, builds up its weaker parts, keeps it safe from harm; but later it is the book itself that grows up, selects our tomb, protects it against false rumours and somewhat against oblivion. But to return to myself—I had a more modest opinion of my book and it would be incorrect to say even that I was thinking of those who might read it as "my readers." For, as I have already shewn, they would not be my readers but readers of themselves, my book serving merely as a sort of magnifying glass, such as the optician of Combray used to offer to a customer, so that through my book I would give them the means of reading in their own selves. Consequently, I would not ask them to

praise or dispraise me but only to tell me if it is as I say, if the words they read in themselves are, indeed, the same as I have written (any possible discrepancies in this respect not being always attributable, by the way, to any mistake on my part but to the fact that the reader's eyes would not be of the type which my book would "fit" for comfortably reading in one's own self). And constantly changing the simile as I obtained a better and more material conception of the task to which I was going to devote myself, I thought how I would work at my book on my large, white-pine table, with Françoise looking on. As all the unpretentious persons who live close beside us acquire a certain intuitive comprehension of our work and as I had forgotten Albertine sufficiently to forgive Françoise for whatever she might have done to injure her, I would work near her and almost in her manner—at least, as she used to, for she was now so old she could scarcely see any more—for, pinning on an extra sheet here and there, I would construct my book, I dare not say ambitiously "like a cathedral," but simply like a dress. And if I did not have at hand all my papers—my "old rubbish," as Françoise called it—and just the one I needed was missing, Françoise would understand perfectly my exasperation, since she herself always used to say she could not sew unless she had the size thread and the buttons she needed and also because she had lived my life so long that she had developed a sort of instinctive understanding of literary work more correct than that possessed by many intelligent persons and, *a fortiori,* by stupid people. In the same way, years before, when I was writing my article for *Le Figaro,* whereas the old butler, with that sympathetic expression which always somewhat overestimates the arduousness of a kind of work one is not accustomed to performing and of which one has not even a clear conception—or even the discomfort of a habit one is free from, like the folk who say, "How it must tire you to sneeze like that"—used to pity writers sincerely, saying "How you must have to rack your brains over that work," Françoise, on the con-

trary, sensed my happiness and respected my work. She got angry only when I told Bloch about my articles beforehand, because she was afraid he would steal my ideas. "All these people," she would say, "you trust them too much; they're a lot of copy-cats." And Bloch, as a matter of fact, would establish a retroactive alibi for himself, whenever I outlined something he thought was good, by saying, "Why, that's funny, I've written something almost exactly like that. I must read it to you." (He could not have read it to me then and there but would go and write it that very evening.)

My papers—what Françoise called my "old rubbish"—by dint of being continually pasted together, would get torn here and there. When necessary, Françoise would help me mend them in the same way as she put patches on the worn parts of her dresses or, while waiting for the glazier (just as I was waiting for the printer) pasted a piece of newspaper over the broken pane of the kitchen window.

Pointing to my notebooks, eaten away like wood an insect has gotten into, she would exclaim, "It's all moth-eaten; it's too bad; here's a piece of a page that's all in ribbons." And, examining it like a tailor, "I don't think I can fix that; it's too far gone. It's a pity; maybe that's your finest ideas. As they say at Combray, there aren't any furriers who know their business as well as the moths do. They always get into the best materials."

Moreover, since in this book the individual entities, human or otherwise, would be constructed from numerous impressions which, derived from many young girls, many churches, many sonatas, would go to make up a single sonata, a single church, a single young girl, would I not be making my book the way Françoise made her *boeuf à la mode* so liked by M. de Norpois, the jelly of which was enriched by so many carefully selected pieces of meat? And I would realise what I had so much longed for in my walks along the Guermantes way but had believed impossible, just as I had believed it would be impossible when I went home ever to get accustomed to going to bed without kissing my mother, or,

later, to the idea that Albertine loved women, an idea I finally adjusted to without even being aware of its presence, for our gravest apprehensions, as well as our fondest hopes, are not beyond our strength and we are able in the end to overcome the former and realise the latter.—Yes, this conception of time which I had just formulated warned me that I must at once set myself to this work. It was high time; this justified the anxiety which had come over me the moment I entered the drawing-room, when the made-up faces gave me a sense of the time lost. But was there yet time? The mind also has its landscapes which it is allowed to contemplate only for a moment. I had lived like a painter climbing a road overlooking a lake, which is hidden from his eyes by a curtain of rocks and trees. Through a breach he catches sight of it, has it all before him, takes out his brushes. But already night is coming on when painting will be impossible, the night on which day will never dawn!

One prerequisite to my book, such as I had conceived it just now in the library, was that I plumb to the very bottom impressions which I should first have to re-create with the aid of my memory. But my memory was exhausted. Then, too, as long as nothing had been begun, I could, indeed, be uneasy, even if I thought that at my age I still had several years before me, for my hour might strike in a few minutes. As a matter of fact, I must start from the idea that I had a body, in other words, that I was continually under the threat of a two-fold danger, external and internal. But even there I spoke in that way only for convenience of expression. For the internal danger, such as a cerebral hemorrhage, is external, being of the body. And having a body constitutes the principal danger that threatens the mind. The life of the thinking human being—which certainly is to be described less as a perfecting of physical, animal life than as an imperfect creation, still as rudimentary as the communal existence of protozoa in polyparies or the body of the whale and so on—is such, in the organisation of the spiritual life, that the body imprisons the mind in a fortress; soon the

fortress is besieged on all sides and in the end the mind must capitulate. But, admitting this distinction between the two kinds of danger that threaten the mind, and beginning with the external one, I recalled that, many times in my past life, in moments of mental stimulation, when some circumstance had suspended all physical activity for me—for instance when, half-intoxicated, I was leaving the restaurant at Rivebelle in a carriage to go to some nearby casino, it had happened to me to feel very definitely within myself the momentary subject of my thoughts and to understand that it was a mere matter of chance, not only that this subject had come into my mind at all but also that it had not been annihilated at that time along with my body. This mattered little to me. My gaiety was neither foresighted nor apprehensive. That this joy left me in a second and disappeared into thin air was of little consequence to me. But it was no longer the same now, the reason being that the happiness I felt did not come from a purely subjective tension of the nerves, which isolates us from the past, but on the contrary from a broadening out of my mind in which the past took shape again, became vividly present and gave me—but, alas, only for a moment—a sense of eternity. I fain would have bequeathed this last to those whom I might have enriched with my treasure. What I had felt in the library and sought to preserve was pleasure, it is true, but no longer selfish or, if so, then with a selfishness which could be made profitable to others—for all the fruitful forms of altruism in nature follow a selfish pattern in their development; human altruism which is not selfish is sterile, like that of the writer who interrupts his work to receive an unhappy friend, accept a public function or write propaganda articles.

The indifference I used to feel on my way back from Rivebelle was gone; I felt myself pregnant with the work which I was carrying within me, like some precious and fragile object which had been entrusted to me and which I desired to transmit intact to the other persons for whom it was destined. And to think that, when I went home pres-

ently, an accidental shock would suffice to destroy my body and force my mind, from which the life would be withdrawn, to abandon forever the ideas it was at this moment clasping to its bosom and shielding anxiously with its quivering flesh, not yet having had time to put them out of harm's way in a book. Now the feeling that I was the bearer of a literary work made an accident in which I might meet with death more to be dreaded, even absurd (in proportion as this work appeared to me necessary and enduring) inimical to my desire and to the eager aspiration of my thoughts, but none the less possible for all that, since accidents, being the product of material causes, may perfectly well take place when very different intentions, which they destroy without knowing what they are, make them most objectionable, as happens every day in the simplest incidents of life, as when, though we desire with all our heart not to make any noise on account of a sleeping friend, a carafe, placed too near the edge of a table, falls and wakes him.

I knew very well that my brain was a rich mineral basin where there was a vast area of extremely varied precious deposits. But would I have time to exploit them? I was the only person able to do this, for two reasons: with my death there would disappear, not only the one miner able to extract the minerals but the deposit itself; now, when I returned home presently, a collision between the auto I took and another would suffice to destroy my body and to force my mind to abandon my new ideas for all time. And, by a strange coincidence, this rational fear of danger was developing in me at a time when the idea of death had been for only a short while a matter of indifference to me. The fear of ceasing to be myself had formerly caused me horror and especially with each new love that came to me—for Gilberte, for Albertine—because I could not endure the idea that one day he who loved them would exist no longer, which would be a sort of death. But, after this fear had recurred many times, it was naturally transmitted into a confident serenity.

While the idea of death had thus in those days cast a

shadow over love for me, for a long time now the remembrance of love had aided me to contemplate death without fear, for I understood that it was no new thing to die but that, on the contrary, I had already died many times since childhood. To take the most recent period—had I not clung to Albertine even more than to life itself? Could I at that time have conceived of myself without my love for her continuing to form part of me? Now, I no longer loved her; I was, not the person who used to love her but a different person who did not love her; I had ceased to love her when I had become another person. But I did not suffer on account of having become this other person and having ceased to love Albertine; and, assuredly, some day no longer to have my body could in no wise appear to me as sad a thing as formerly had seemed to me the idea of some day no longer loving Albertine. And yet how unimportant it now appeared to me not to love her any more. These successive deaths, so dreaded by the "me" they were to obliterate, but so gentle and inconsequential once they had become a fact and when he who had feared them was no longer there to feel them, had a while before made me realise how unintelligent it would be to be afraid of death. And it was now, shortly after I had become indifferent to death, that I was beginning anew to fear it—under another form, it is true, and not for myself but for my book, to the full flowering of which this life, menaced by so many dangers, was, at least for a while, indispensable. Victor Hugo said,

Il faut que l'herbe pousse et que les enfants meurent.

But I say that it is the cruel law of art that human beings should die and that we ourselves must die after exhausting the gamut of suffering so that the grass, not of oblivion but of eternal life, may grow, the thick grass of fecund works of art, on which future generations will come and gaily have their "picnic lunch," without a thought for those who sleep beneath. I said "external dangers," but there are internal

dangers also. If I escaped an accident from without, who knows whether I might not be prevented from making full use of this merciful favour through some mischance occurring within myself, some internal catastrophe, some cerebral accident, before the months had passed that were needed for the writing of this book?

Even the cerebral accident was not necessary. Some symptoms—indicated to me by a peculiar mental void and a tendency to forget things and have them come back to me only by accident, just as, when you are putting certain objects in order, you come across one you had forgotten and had not even thought to look for—made me feel like a miser whose broken treasure chest had allowed his riches to slip away one by one.

When I should return home presently through the Champs-Elysées, what guarantee had I that I would not be struck with the same malady as was my grandmother one afternoon when she had come there with me for a stroll which was to be her last, without her suspecting it, unconscious, as are we all, that the minute-hand now stands over the very point where the spring will be released to strike the hour? Possibly the fear of having already consumed almost the entire minute which precedes the first stroke of the hour and during which the stroke is making ready to fall, possibly the fear that it was about to be set in motion in my brain, was a sort of obscure sense of what was going to happen, a reflexion in the consciousness, so to speak, of the precarious condition of the brain, the arteries of which are about to give way—which is no more impossible than the sudden conviction of approaching death which many a wounded man has so clearly that, although he has retained his mental lucidity and both the physician and his own desire to live seek to deceive him, he says, foreseeing what is going to happen, "I am going to die, I am ready," and he writes his farewell to his wife.

This obscure sense of what was going to happen was conveyed to me by the strange thing which occurred before I

had begun my book and which befell me in a manner I would never have expected. When I went out one evening, my friends thought me looking better than before; they expressed surprise that my hair was still black. But three times I nearly fell as I went down the stairs. I was away only two hours and yet, when I got home, I felt as if I had no memory, no power to think, no strength, no life at all. If someone had come to see me, to proclaim me king, to lay hold of me, to arrest me, I would have let them do to me whatever they wished without uttering a word or opening my eyes, like the people crossing the Caspian Sea who are taken with the worst form of seasickness and do not even make a feeble gesture of resistance when they are told they are going to be thrown overboard. Strictly speaking, I had no particular illness but I felt as though I had become incapable of anything, as frequently happens to an old man who, active the day before, breaks his hip or has an attack of indigestion and may for some time to come lead a bedridden existence which is only a more or less long preparation for the now inevitable end. One of my various selves—the one who used to go to those barbaric banquets called formal dinners, where for the white-shirted men and the semi-nude, feather-bedecked women values are so reversed that anyone who does not come, after accepting the invitation, or does not arrive until the roast is being served, commits a more reprehensible act than the immoral conduct discussed so lightly in the course of the dinner along with recent deaths, and where death or serious illness are the only excuses for not coming (and then only provided you notify your hostess of your dying condition in time for her to invite a fourteenth person)—that self within me had kept his society scruples and lost his memory. My other self, on the contrary, the one who had reached a clear conception of his task, had not forgotten. I had received an invitation from Mme. Molé and had learned that Mme. Sazerat's son was dead. I made up my mind to waste in sending apologies to Mme. Molé and condolences to Mme. Sazerat one of those

hours after which, my tongue paralysed, as was the case with my grandmother during her last illness, I would no longer be able to utter a word or even swallow some milk. But a few minutes later I had forgotten that I was to do this. Fortunate forgetfulness, as the remembrance of my work was vigilant and would employ in laying the first foundations the hour of extra existence which had thus reverted to me. Unluckily, as I took up a notebook to start writing, Mme. Molé's card of invitation slipped in front of me. Straightway my forgetful self which, however, took precedence over the other, as happens with all scrupulous barbarians who attend formal dinners, pushed the notebook aside and wrote to Mme. Molé—who, by the way, would doubtless have thought very highly of me for it, had she learned that I had put my reply to her invitation ahead of my architectural labours. Suddenly a remark in my reply reminded me that Mme. Sazerat had lost her son; I wrote to her also. Then, having sacrificed a real duty to the fictitious obligation of shewing myself courteous and sympathetic, I fell back exhausted, closed my eyes and for a week I merely vegetated. And yet, while all my useless duties to which I was ready to sacrifice the real one went out of my head in a few minutes, the idea of the thing I was to construct did not leave me for an instant. I knew not whether it would be a church in which the true believers would be able little by little to learn some truths and discover some harmonies, the great, comprehensive plan, or would stand, forever unvisited, on the summit of an island, like a druid monument. But I had decided to devote to it all my strength, which was leaving me slowly, as though reluctant and wishing to allow me time, having completed the outer structure, to close the funereal door. Soon I was able to shew a few sketches. No one understood a word. Even those who were favourable to my conception of the truths which I intended later to carve within the temple congratulated me on having discovered them with a microscope when I had, on the contrary, used a telescope to perceive things which, it is true,

were very small but situated afar off and each of them a world in itself. Whereas I had sought great laws, they called me one who grubs for petty details. Moreover, what was the use of my undertaking it? I had had a certain facility as a young man and Bergotte had declared my schoolboy writings "perfect" *; but instead of working, I had lived in idleness, in the dissipation of a life of pleasure, amid sickness, care of my health and strange humours, and I was taking up my work on the eve of my death, with no knowledge of my craft. I no longer felt equal to facing either my obligations to human beings or my duties to my thought and work—still less to both. As for the former, my task was somewhat simplified by my habit of forgetting the letters I had to write. The loss of my memory aided me a little by cutting out some of my obligations; my work filled their place. But suddenly at the end of a month the association of ideas brought back my memory, together with my remorse, and I was crushed with a sense of my own impotence. I was astonished to find myself indifferent to the criticism made of me but the truth is that, from the day when my legs had trembled so as I descended the stairs, I had become indifferent to everything; I craved nothing now but rest, while waiting for the long rest that would eventually come. My unconcern over the approval of the élite of my own time was not due to the expectation that my work would not receive until after my death the admiration which it seemed to me to deserve. Those who came after me might think what they wished. I was just as little concerned about that. In reality, if I thought of my work and not at all of the letters to be answered, this was no longer because I recognised any great difference in importance between the two objects, as I had done in the days of my idleness and then in the time of my active work up to the evening when I was obliged to seize hold of the railing of the staircase. The organisation of my memory and my preoccupations was closely bound up

* Allusion to the author's first book, *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*. (Note in the French edition.)

with my work, perhaps because, whereas the letters were forgotten immediately after being received, the idea of my work was in my mind, always the same, in a perpetual state of development. But it also had become irksome to me. It was to me like a son whose dying mother must still take upon herself the fatigue of looking after him between injections and cuppings. Possibly she still loves him but she now knows it only through the exhausting obligation she is under to take care of him. In me the powers of the writer were no longer equal to the inconsiderate demands of the work. Since that day on the staircase, nothing concerning the social world, no happiness, whether it came from the friendliness of people, the progress of my work, the hope of fame, any longer penetrated to my consciousness except as such a pale ray of sunlight that it no longer had the power to warm me, put life into me, give me any desire whatsoever; and even at that, wan though it was, it was still too dazzling for my eyes and I preferred to close them and turn my head toward the wall. It seems to me, as far as I was able to feel the movement of my lips, that I must have had an imperceptible little smile at one corner of my mouth when a lady wrote me, "I was *surprised* not get a reply to my letter." Nevertheless, that reminded me of the letter and I answered her. In order that I might not be thought an ingrate, I tried to place my present courtesy on a par with the courtesy people might have had for me. And I was crushed under the superhumanly wearisome burdens of life which I imposed upon my existence as it ebbed to its agonising close.

This idea of death took up its permanent abode within me as does love for a woman. Not that I loved death, I detested it. But, doubtless because I had pondered over it from time to time as over a woman one does not yet love, now the thought of it adhered to the deepest stratum of my brain so completely that I could not turn my attention to anything without first relating it to the idea of death and, even if I was not occupied with anything but was in a state of complete repose, the idea of death was with me as continuously

as the idea of myself. I do not think that, on the day I became half-dead, it was the accompanying symptoms, such as my inability to descend the staircase, to recall a name, to get up, which gave rise, even by an unconscious process of reasoning, to the idea of death, the idea that I was already nearly dead, but rather that all this had come at the same time, that inevitably the great mirror of the mind was reflecting a new reality. And yet I did not see how one could pass without warning from the ills I was enduring to actual death. But then I thought of others, of all those who die every day without the hiatus between their illness and their death seeming to us extraordinary. I even thought it was only because I saw them from within (still more than through the consequent disappointment of my hopes) that certain ailments did not appear to me fatal when considered singly, although I believed in my death, just as those who are the most firmly convinced that their term has come are nevertheless easily persuaded that, if they cannot pronounce certain words, it has nothing to do with a stroke or an attack of aphasia, but comes from a fatigue of the tongue, from a nervous affection akin to stammering or from exhaustion consequent upon an attack of indigestion.

As for me, it was something quite other than a dying man's farewell to his wife which I had to write, something long and addressed to more than one person. Long to write! Only in the daytime, at best, might I try to sleep. If I worked, it would be only at night. But I should need many nights, possibly a hundred, possibly a thousand. And I would live in the anxiety of not knowing whether the master of my destiny, less indulgent than the Sultan Sheriar, when I interrupted my story in the morning, would permit me to take up the continuation of it the following evening. Not that I intended to reproduce in any respect *The Arabian Nights,* any more than the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon, which likewise were written at night, any more than any of the books I had loved so deeply that, superstitiously devoted to them as to the women I loved, I could not, in my childish

naïveté, imagine without horror a book that might be different from them. But like Elstir and Chardin, one cannot reproduce what one loves without abandoning it. Doubtless my books also, like my earthly being, would finally some day die. But one must resign oneself to the idea of death. One accepts the idea that in ten years one's self, and in a hundred years one's books, will no longer exist. Eternal existence is not promised to books any more than to men. It might be a book as long as *The Arabian Nights* but entirely different. It is quite true that, when one is enamoured of a book, one would like to create something exactly like it but one must sacrifice one's love of the moment and think, not of one's predilection but of a truth which does not ask our preferences and forbids us to give them a thought. And it is only by following this truth that one happens occasionally to come upon what one abandoned and, even while keeping them out of one's mind, to write the *Arabian Nights* or the *Mémoires of Saint-Simon* of another period. But had I still time? Was it not too late?

In any event, if I still had the strength to accomplish my work, I realised that the nature of the circumstances which to-day, even during the progress of this reception at the Princesse de Guermantes', had given me at one and the same time the idea of my work and the fear of not being able to carry it out would assuredly before all else imprint upon it the form I had once dimly sensed in the church at Combray, during certain days which had deeply influenced me, a form which usually remains invisible to us, the form of Time. This dimension of Time which I had once vaguely felt in the church at Combray I would try to make continually perceptible in a transcription of human life necessarily very different from that conveyed to us by our deceptive senses. There are, it is true—this was proven to me, as has been seen, by sundry episodes in this narrative—many other errors of our senses which distort for us the true aspect of this world. But after all, in the more accurate transcription which I would do my utmost to give, I would at least be

able not to change the location of sounds, to take care not to detach them from their cause, with which the intelligence retroactively associates them—although to make rain hum in the middle of a room and our boiling *tisane* come down in torrents in the courtyard cannot, when all is said and done, be more disconcerting than what artists have so often done in representing as very near us or very far away, according as the laws of perspective, the intensity of the colours and the illusion of the first glance make them appear to us, a sail or a mountain peak which our reason will later move, sometimes an enormous distance, farther away or nearer to us.

I might, although this error is more serious, continue, as is customary, to assign features to the countenance of a passing woman character, whereas, in place of the nose, cheeks and chin, there should at the very most be a vacant space on which would play the light of our desires. And even if I did not have the leisure for that far more important matter, namely, to prepare the hundred masks that needs must be attached to a single face—even if one would merely portray it according to the various pairs of eyes that look at it and the meanings they read into its features and, in the case of one and the same pair of eyes, according to the hope and fear (or, on the contrary, the love and confidence) which over so many years hide the changes due to age; even, moreover, if I did not (although my liaison with Albertine sufficed to prove to me that otherwise all is spurious and deceitful) undertake to represent certain persons, not outwardly but as they exist within us, where their slightest acts may induce fatal disturbances, and did not undertake also to vary the lighting from the subjective sky according to the variations in pressure of our sensitiveness or according to the serenity of our confidence, which makes an object seem so small, whereas the mere shadow of a risk instantly multiplies its size; even if I could not introduce these changes and many others (the necessity for which, if one desires to paint things as they really are, has become apparent in the course

of this narrative) into the transcription of a universe which required to be entirely redrawn, at any rate I would not fail, above all else, to describe man as having the length, not of his body but of his years, which he must drag about with him from place to place, an ever increasing burden which overcomes him in the end. Moreover, everyone realises that we occupy a steadily growing place in Time and this universality could not fail to rejoice me, since it was truth, the truth vaguely sensed by each, which I must seek to make clear to all. Not only is everyone conscious that we occupy a place in Time, but this place even the most simple-minded person measures approximately, just as he would measure the place we occupy in space. True, the measuring is often incorrect, but the fact that it was considered possible shews that age was thought of as something measurable.

I also asked myself, "Not only have I still time, but am I going to be able to complete my work?" By forcing me, like a stern spiritual adviser, to declare myself dead to the world, illness had done me a great service—for, an the grain of wheat die not after it hath been sown, it will abide alone; but if it die, it will bear much fruit—and after indolence had protected me from my facility in writing, ill health was perhaps going to save me from my indolence; but this same illness had exhausted my mental faculties and (as I had noticed long before, when I ceased to love Albertine) also the power of my memory. But re-creating through the memory impressions which must then be plumbed to their depths, brought into the light and transformed into intellectual equivalents, was this not one of the prerequisites, almost the very essence, of a work of art such as I had conceived it in the library a few moments ago? Ah, if only I still had the mental power that was intact on that evening the memory of which I evoked when my eye fell on *François le Champi!* It was that evening, when my mother abdicated her authority, which marked the commencement of the waning of my will-power and my health, as well as the beginning of my grandmother's lingering death. Every-

thing was predetermined from the moment when, unable any longer to endure the idea of waiting until the morning to press a kiss upon my mother's face, I made up my mind, jumped out of bed and, in my nightshirt, went and sat by the window through which the moonlight came, until I heard M. Swann leave. My parents had accompanied him to the door; I heard the door open, the bell tinkle and the door shut again. Even at this moment, in the mansion of the Prince de Guermantes, I heard the sound of my parents' footsteps as they accompanied M. Swann and the reverberating, ferruginous, interminable, sharp, jangling tinkle of the little bell which announced to me that at last M. Swann had gone and Mamma was going to come upstairs—I heard these sounds again, the very identical sounds themselves, although situated so far back in the past. Then, thinking over all the events that necessarily ranged themselves between the moment when I heard those sounds and the Guermantes reception, I was startled at the thought that it was, indeed, this bell which was still tinkling within me and that I could in no wise change its sharp janglings, since, having forgotten just how they died away, to recapture it and hear it distinctly, I was forced to close my ears to the sound of the conversations the masks were carrying on around me. To endeavour to listen to it from nearby, I had to descend again into my own consciousness. It must be, then, that this tinkling was still there and also, between it and the present moment, all the infinitely unrolling past which I had been unconsciously carrying within me. When the bell tinkled, I was already in existence and, since that night, for me to have been able to hear the sound again, there must have been no break of continuity, not a moment of rest for me, no cessation of existence, of thought, of consciousness of myself, since this distant moment still clung to me and I could recapture it, go back to it, merely by descending more deeply within myself. It was this conception of time as incarnate, of past years as still close held within us, which I was now determined to bring out into such bold relief in

my book. And it is because they thus contain all the hours of days gone by that human bodies can do such injury to those who love them, because they contain so many past memories, joys and desires, already effaced for them but so cruel for one who contemplates and carries back in the domain of Time the cherished body of which he is jealous, jealous even to the point of desiring its destruction. For after death Time withdraws from the body, and the memories —so pale and insignificant—are effaced from her who no longer exists, and soon will be from him whom they still torture, and the memories themselves will perish in the end when the desire of a living body is no longer there to keep them alive.

There came over me a feeling of profound fatigue at the realisation that all this long stretch of time not only had been uninterruptedly lived, thought, secreted by me, that it was my life, my very self, but also that I must, every minute of my life, keep it closely by me, that it upheld me, that I was perched on its dizzying summit, that I could not move without carrying it about with me.

The date when I heard the sound—so distant and yet so deep within me—of the little bell in the garden at Combray was a landmark I did not know I had available in this enormous dimension of Time. My head swam to see so many years below me, and yet within me, as if I were thousands of leagues in height.

I now understood why it was that the Duc de Guermantes, whom, as I looked at him sitting in a chair, I marvelled to find shewing his age so little, although he had so many more years than I beneath him, as soon as he rose and tried to stand erect, had tottered on trembling limbs (like those of aged archbishops who have nothing solid on them except their metallic cross, with the young divinity students flocking assiduously about them) and had wavered as he made his way along the difficult summit of his eighty-three years, as if men were perched on giant stilts, sometimes taller than church spires, constantly growing and finally rendering their

progress so difficult and perilous that they suddenly fall. I was alarmed that mine were already so tall beneath my feet; it did not seem as if I should have the strength to carry much longer attached to me that past which already extended so far down and which I was bearing so painfully within me! If, at least, there were granted me time enough to complete my work, I would not fail to stamp it with the seal of that Time the understanding of which was this day so forcibly impressing itself upon me, and I would therein describe men—even should that give them the semblance of monstrous creatures—as occupying in Time a place far more considerable than the so restricted one allotted them in space, a place, on the contrary, extending boundlessly since, giant-like, reaching far back into the years, they touch simultaneously epochs of their lives—with countless intervening days between—so widely separated from one another in Time.

The End.